

J. M. d.

A  
TREATISE  
Concerning the  
PRINCIPLES  
OF  
*Human Knowledge.*

---

PART I.

---

Wherein the chief Causes of Error and Difficulty in the *Sciences*, with the Grounds of *Scepticism*, *Atheism*, and *Irreligion*, are inquir'd into.

---

By George Berkeley, M. A. Fellow of  
*Trinity-College, Dublin.*

---

DUBLIN:

Printed by AARON RHAMES, for JEREMY  
PEPYAT, Bookseller in Skinner-Row, 1710.

K  
28



D<sup>®</sup>

ch  
ions



MVSEVM  
BRITAN  
NICVM

62

TO THE  
Right Honourable  
**THOMAS**  
EARL OF  
**PEMBROKE, &c.**

*Knight of the Most Noble Order*  
of the GARTER,

AND

One of the *Lords* of Her  
*MAJESTY's Most Honourable*  
PRIVY COUNCIL.

MY LORD,

**Y**OU'll, perhaps, wonder  
that an obscure Person,  
who has not the Honour  
to be known to Your Lord-  
ship, shou'd presume to Ad-  
dress You in this manner. But

A 2

that



ii. *The Dedication.*

that a Man, who has Written something with a design to promote *useful Knowledge and Religion* in the World, shou'd make Choice of Your Lordship for his Patron, will not be thought strange by any one that is not altogether unacquainted with the present State of the Church and Learning, and consequently ignorant how great an Ornament and Support You are to both. Yet, nothing cou'd have induced me to make You this present of my poor Endeavours, were I not Encourag'd by that Candour and Native Goodness, which is so bright a Part in Your Lordship's Character. I might add, my Lord, that the Extraordinary Favour and Bounty You have been pleas'd to

*The Dedication.*      *iii.*

to shew towards our Society,  
gave me Hopes, You'd not be  
unwilling to countenance the  
Studies of one of its Mem-  
bers. These Considerations  
determin'd me to lay this Trea-  
tise at Your Lordship's Feet.  
And the rather, because I was  
Ambitious to have it known,  
that I am with the truest and  
most profound Respect, on ac-  
count of that Learning and  
Vertue which the World so  
justly Admires in Your Lord-  
ship,

*My Lord,*

*Your Lordship's*

*Most Humble*

*And most Devoted*

*Servant.*

*George Berkeley.*



[ 1 ]

---

THE  
PREFACE.

**W**HAT I here make Publick has, after a long and scrupulous Inquiry, seem'd to me evidently true, and not unuseful to be known, particularly to those who are tainted with Scepticism, or want a Demonstration of the Existence and Immateriality of God, or the Natural Immortality of the Soul. Whether it be so or no, I am content the Reader shou'd impartially Examine. Since I do not think my self any farther concern'd for the Success of what I have Written, than as it is agreeable to Truth. But to the end This may not suffer, I make it my Request that the Reader suspend his Judgment, till he has once, at least, read the whole through with that degree of Attention and Thought which the subject Matter shall seem to deserve. For as there are some Passages that, taken by themselves,

## The PREFACE.

*selves, are very liable (nor cou'd it be remedied) to gross Misinterpretation, and to be charged with most absurd Consequences, which, nevertheless, upon an intire perusal will appear not to follow from them: So likewise, tho' the whole shou'd be read over, yet, if this be done Transiently, 'tis very probable my Sense may be mistaken; but to a Thinking Reader, I flatter my self, it will be throughout Clear and Obvious. As for the Characters of Novelty and Singularity, which some of the following Notions may seem to bear, 'tis, I hope, needless to make any Apology on that account. He must surely be either very weak, or very little acquainted with the Sciences, who shall reject a Truth, that is capable of Demonstration, for no other Reason but because it's newly known and contrary to the Prejudices of Mankind. Thus much I thought fit to premise, in order to prevent, if possible, the hasty Censures of a sort of Men, who are too apt to condemn an Opinion before they rightly comprehend it.*

ERRATA.



# ERRATA.

Pag. Lin.		Pag. Lin.	
60	14 for one, read own.	125	7 after by, r. the.
61	11 for shou'd, r. might.	131	3 for many, r. may.
ibid	14 after Intelligence, r. without	156	10 for shew, r. shewing.
	the help of External Bodies	160	19 after relation, r. in.
83	9 for came, r. come.	165	7 for any r. some.
121	7 after there, r. are.	187	19 for have r. hath.
124	1 f. acception, r. acceptation.		

Page 12, line 5, after *General Ideas whatsoever*, these Words are to be Inserted, viz. To be plain, I own my self able to abstract in one Sense, as when I consider some particular Parts or Qualities separated from others, with which tho' they are united in some Object, yet it is possible they may really Exist without them. But I deny that I can abstract from one another, or conceive separately, those Qualities which it is impossible shou'd Exist so separated; or that I can frame a General Notion by abstracting from Particulars in the manner aforesaid. Which two last are the proper Acceptations of *Abstraction*.

*Introduction.*

§ 1. **P**HILOSOPHY being nothing else but the study of Wisdom and Truth, it may with reason be expected, that those who have spent most Time and Pains in it shou'd enjoy a greater calm and serenity of Mind, a greater clearness and evidence of Knowledge, and be less disturb'd with Doubts and Difficulties than other Men. Yet so it is, we see the Illiterate Bulk of Mankind that walk the High-road of plain, common Sense, and are govern'd by the Dictates of Nature, for the most part easy and undisturb'd. To them nothing that's familiar appears unaccountable or difficult to comprehend. They complain not of any want of Evidence in their Senses, and are out of all danger of becoming *Sceptics*. But no sooner do we depart from Sense and Instinct to follow the Light of a Superior Principle



ciple, to reason, meditate and reflect on the Nature of Things, but a thousand Scruples spring up in our Minds, concerning those Things which before we seem'd fully to comprehend. Prejudices and Errors of Sense do from all Parts discover themselves to our view; and endeavouring to correct these by Reason we are insensibly drawn into uncouth Paradoxes, Difficulties, and Inconsistences, which multiply and grow upon us as we advance in Speculation; till at length, having wander'd thro' many intricate Mazes, we find our selves just where we were, or, which is worse, sit down in a forelorn Scepticism.

§ 2. The cause of this is thought to be the Obscurity of things, or the natural Weakness and Imperfection of our Understandings. It is said the Faculties we have are few, and those design'd by Nature for the Support and Pleasure of Life, and not to penetrate into the inward Essence and Constitution of Things. Besides, the Mind of  
Man

## *Introduction.*

3

Man being Finite, when it treats of Things which partake of Infinity, it's not to be wonder'd at, if it run into Absurdities and Contradictions, out of which it is impossible it shou'd ever extricate it self, it being of the nature of Infinite not to be comprehended by that which is Finite.

§ 3. But, perhaps, we may be too partial to our selves in placing the Fault originally in our Faculties, and not rather in the wrong use we make of them. It is a hard thing to suppose, that right Deductions from true Principles shou'd ever end in Consequences which cannot be maintain'd or made consistent. We shou'd believe that God has dealt more bountifully with the Sons of Men, than to give them a strong desire for that Knowledge, which he had placed quite out of their reach. This were not agreeable to the wonted, indulgent Methods of Providence, which, whatever Appetites it may have implanted in the Creatures, doth usually furnish 'em with such means as, if

B 2

rightly

rightly made use of, will not fail to satisfie them. Upon the whole, I am inclin'd to think that the far greater Part, if not all, of those Difficulties which have hitherto amus'd Philosophers, and block'd up the way to Knowledge, are intirely owing to our selves. That we have first rais'd a Dust, and then complain, we cannot see.

§ 4. My Purpose therefore is, to try if I can discover what those Principles are, which have introduced all that Doubtfulness and Uncertainty, those Absurdities and Contradictions into the several Sects of Philosophy; insomuch that the Wisest Men have thought our Ignorance incurable, conceiving it to arise from the natural dulness and limitation of our Faculties. And surely it is a Work well deserving our Pains, to make a strict inquiry concerning the first Principles of *Human Knowledge*, to Sift and examine them on all sides, especially since there may be some Grounds to suspect that those Lets and Difficulties, which stay and embarrass the Mind in  
it's



it's search after Truth, do not spring from any Darkness and Intricacy in the Objects, or natural Defect in the Understanding, so much as from false Principles which have been insisted on, and might have been avoided.

§ 5. How difficult and discouraging soever this Attempt may seem, when I consider what a number of very great and extraordinary Men have gone before me in the like Designs: Yet I am not without some Hopes, upon the Consideration that the largest Views are not always the Clearest, and that he who is Short-sighted will be obliged to draw the Object nearer, and may, perhaps, by a close and narrow Survey discern that which had escaped far better Eyes.

§ 6. In order to prepare the Mind of the Reader for the easier conceiving what follows, I thought it proper to premise somewhat, by way of Introduction, concerning the Nature and Abuse of Language. But the unraveling this Matter leads me in some measure to anticipate

anticipate my Design, by taking notice of what seems to have had a chief part in rendering Speculation intricate and perplex'd, and to have occasion'd innumerable Errors and Difficulties in almost all parts of Knowledge. And that is the opinion that the Mind hath a power of framing *Abstract Ideas* or *Notions* of Things. He who is not a perfect Stranger to the Writings and Disputes of Philosophers, must needs acknowledge that no small part of them are spent about abstract Ideas. These are, in a more especial manner, thought to be the Object of those Sciences which go by the name of *Logic* and *Metaphysics*, and of all that which passes under the Notion of the most abstracted and sublime Learning, in all which one shall scarce find any Question handled in such a manner, as does not suppose their Existence in the Mind, and that it is well acquainted with them.

§ 7. It is agreed on all hands, that the Qualities or Modes of things do never really exist each of them apart by  
it

it self, and separated from all others, but are mix'd, as it were, and blended together, several in the same Object. But we are told, the Mind being able to consider each Quality singly, or abstracted from those other Qualities with which it is united, does by that means frame to it self abstract Ideas. For example, there is perceiv'd by Sight an Object extended, coloured, and moved: This mix'd or compound Idea the mind resolving into it's Simple, constituent Parts, and viewing each by it self, exclusive of the rest, does frame the abstract Ideas of Extension, Colour & Motion. Not that it is possible for Colour or Motion to exist without Extension, but only that the Mind can frame to it self by *Abstraction* the Idea of Colour exclusive of Extension, and of Motion exclusive of both Colour and Extension.

§ 8. Again, the Mind having observ'd that in the particular Extensions perceiv'd by Sense, there is something common and alike in all, and some other things peculiar, as this or that Figure



gure or Magnitude, which distinguish them one from another; it considers apart or singles out by it self that which is common, making thereof a most abstract Idea of Extension, which is neither Line, Surface nor Solid, nor has any Figure or Magnitude but is an Idea intirely prescinded from all these. So likewise the Mind by leaving out of the particular Colours perceiv'd by Sense, that which distinguishes them one from another, and retaining that only which is common to all, makes an Idea of Colour in abstract which is neither Red, nor Blue, nor White, &c. And in like manner by considering Motion abstractedly not only from the Body moved, but likewise from the Figure it describes, and all particular Directions and Velocities, the abstract Idea of Motion is framed; which equally corresponds to all particular Motions whatsoever that may be perceiv'd by Sense.

§ 9. And as the Mind frames to it self abstract Ideas of Qualities or Modes, so does it, by the same precision or  
mental

mental Separation, attain abstract Ideas of the more compounded Beings, which include several coexistent Qualities. For example, the Mind having observ'd that *Peter, James and John, &c.* resemble each other, in certain common Agreements of Shape and other Qualities, leaves out of the complex or compounded Idea it has of *Peter, James, &c.* that which is peculiar to each, retaining only what is common to all; and so makes an abstract Idea wherein all the particulars equally partake, abstracting intirely from and cutting off all those Circumstances and Differences, which might determine it to any particular Existence. And after this manner it is said we come by the abstract Idea of *Man* or, if you please, Humanity or Humane Nature. wherein 'tis true, there's included Colour, because there is no Man but has some Colour, but then it can be neither White, nor Black, nor any particular Colour; because there is no one particular Colour wherein all Men partake. So likewise there is included Stature, but then 'tis neither Tall

Stature nor Low Stature, nor yet Middle Stature, but something abstracted from all these; and so of the rest. Moreover, there being a great variety of other Creatures that partake in some Parts, but not all, of the complex Idea of *Man*, the Mind leaving out those Parts which are peculiar to Men, and retaining those only which are common to all the living Creatures, frames the Idea of *Animal*, which abstracts not only from all particular Men, but also all Birds, Beasts, Fishes and Insects. The constituent Parts of the abstract Idea of Animal are Body, Life, Sense and Spontaneous Motion. By *Body* is meant, Body without any particular Shape or Figure, there being no one Shape or Figure common to all Animals, without Covering, either of Hair, or Feathers, or Scales, &c. nor yet Naked: Hair, Feathers, Scales, and Nakedness being the distinguishing Properties of particular Animals, and for that reason left out of the *Abstract Idea*. Upon the same account the spontaneous Motion must be neither Walking, nor Flying, nor Creeping, it is never-



nevertheless a Motion, but what that Motion is, it is not easy to conceive.

§ 10. Whether others have this wonderful Faculty of *Abstracting their Ideas*, they best can tell : for my self I dare be confident I have it not. I have indeed a Faculty of imagining, or representing to my self the Ideas of those particular things I have perceiv'd and of variously compounding and dividing them. I can imagine a Man with Two Heads or the upper parts of a Man joyn'd to the Body of a Horse. I can consider the Hand, the Eye, the Nose each by it self abstracted or separated from the rest of the Body. But then whatever Hand or Eye I imaginè, it must have some particular Shape and Colour. Likewise the Idea of Man that I frame to my self, must be either of a White, or a Black, or a Tawny, a Streight, or a Crooked, a Tall, or a Low, or a Middle-sized Man. I cannot by any effort of Thought conceive the abstract Idea above described. And it is equally impossible for me to form

the abstract Idea of Motion distinct from the Body moving, and which is neither Swift nor Slow, Curvilinear nor Rectilinear ; and the like may be said of all other abstract general Ideas whatsoever. And there's Grounds to think most Men will acknowledge themselves to be in my Case. The generality of Men which are Simple and Illiterate never pretend to *abstract Notions*. It's said they are difficult and not to be attain'd without Pains and Study ; we may therefore reasonably conclude that, if such there be, they are confin'd only to the Learned.

§ 11. I proceed to examine what can be alleg'd in defence of the Doctrine of Abstraction, and try if I can discover what it is that inclines the Men of Speculation to embrace an Opinion, so remote from common Sense as that seems to be. There has been a late excellent and deservedly Esteem'd Philosopher, who, no doubt, has given it very much Countenance by seeming to think the having abstract general Ideas is what puts the  
widest

widest difference in point of Understanding betwixt Man and Beast. “ The having of general Ideas (*saieth he*) is that  
“ which puts a perfect distinction betwixt Man and Brutes, and is an Excellency which the Faculties of Brutes  
“ do by no means attain unto. For it is evident, we observe no Foot-steps  
“ in them of making use of general Signs for universal Ideas; from which  
“ we have reason to imagine that they have not the Faculty of *abstracting*  
“ or making general Ideas, since they have no use of Words or any other  
“ general Signs. *And a little after.*  
“ Therefore, I think, we may suppose that ’tis in this that the Species of  
“ Brutes are discriminated from Men, and ’tis that proper difference wherein  
“ they are wholly separated, and which at last widens to so wide a Distance.  
“ For if they have any Ideas at all, and are not bare Machines (as some  
“ wou’d have ’em) we cannot deny ’em to have some Reason. It seems as evident to me that they do some of  
“ ’em in certain Instances Reason as that they



“ they have Sense, but it is only in particular Ideas, just as they receive them from their Senses. They are the best of ’em tied up within those narrow Bounds, and have not (as I think) the Faculty to enlarge ’em by any kind of *Abstraction*. *Essay on Hum. Underst.* B. 2. C. 11. § 10 and 11. I readily agree with this Learned Author, that the Faculties of Brutes can by no means attain to *Abstraction*. But then if this be made the distinguishing property of that sort of Animals, I fear a great many of those that pass for Men must be reckon’d into their number. The reason that is here assign’d why we have no Grounds to think Brutes have Abstract general Ideas, is that we observe in ’em no use of Words or any other general Signs; - which is built on this Supposition, *viz.* that the making use of Words, implys the having general Ideas. From which it follows, that Men who use Language are able to Abstract or Generalize their Ideas. That this is the Sense and Arguing of the Author will further appear by his answering

swering the Question he in another place puts. " Since all things that exist are only Particulars, how come we by general Terms? *His Answer is,* Words become general by being made the Signs of general Ideas. *Essay on Hum. Underst. B. 3. C. 3. § 6.* To this I cannot assent being of opinion that a Word becomes general by being made the Sign, not of an abstract general Idea but, of several particular Ideas, any one of which it indifferently suggests to the Mind. For Example, When it is said *the change of Motion is proportional to the impressed force*, or that *whatever has Extension is divisible*; these Propositions are to be understood of Motion and Extension in general, and nevertheless it will not follow that they suggest to my Thoughts an Idea of Motion without a Body mov'd, or any determinate Direction, Velocitie, &c. or that I must conceive an abstract general Idea of Extension, which is neither Line, Surface nor Solid, neither Great nor Small, Black, White, nor Red, &c. 'Tis only implied that whatever Motion I consider,

sider, whether it be Swift or Slow, Perpendicular, Horizontal or Oblique, or in whatever Object, the Axiom concerning it holds equally true. As does the other of every particular Extension, it matters not whether Line, Surface or Solid, whether of this or that Magnitude or Figure, &c.

§ 12. By observing how Ideas become general, we may the better judge how Words are made so. And here it is to be noted that I do not deny absolutely there are general Ideas, but only that there are any *abstract general Ideas* : For in the Passages we have Quoted wherein there is mention of general Ideas, it is always supposed that they are formed by *Abstraction*, after the manner set forth in *Seet. VIII* and *IX*. Now if we will annex a meaning to our Words, and speak only of what we can conceive, I believe we shall acknowledge, that an Idea, which consider'd in it self is particular, becomes general, by being made to represent or stand for all other particular Ideas of the



the same sort. To make this plain by an Example, suppose a Geometrician is demonstrating the Method, of cutting a Line in two equal Parts. He draws, for instance, a Black Line of an Inch in Length, this which in it self is a particular Line is nevertheless with regard to it's signification General, since as it is there used, it represents all particular Lines whatsoever; so that what is demonstrated of it, is demonstrated of all Lines or, in other Words, of a Line in General. And as that particular Line becomes General, by being made a Sign, so the name *Line* which taken absolutely is particular, by being a Sign is made General. And as the former owes its Generality, not to its being the Sign of an abstract or general Line, but of all particular right Lines that may possibly exist, so the latter must be thought to derive its Generality from the same Cause, namely, the various, particular Lines which it indifferently denotes.

§ 13. To give the Reader a yet clearer View of the Nature of abstract Ideas, and the Uses they are thought necessary to, I shall add one more Passage out of the *Essay on Human Understanding*, which is as follows. “ Ab-

“ *stract Ideas* are not so obvious or  
“ easy to Children or the yet unexercis-  
“ ed Mind as particular ones. If they  
“ seem so to grown Men 'tis only be-  
“ cause by constant and familiar Use  
“ they are made so. For when we nice-  
“ ly reflect upon them, we shall find  
“ that general Ideas are Fictions and  
“ Contrivances of the Mind, that carry  
“ Difficulty with them, and do not so  
“ easily offer themselves, as we are apt  
“ to imagine. For Example, Does it not  
“ require some Pains and Skill to form  
“ the general Idea of a Triangle (which  
“ is yet none of the most abstract com-  
“ prehensive and difficult) for it must  
“ be neither Oblique nor Rectangle, nei-  
“ ther Equilateral, Equicrural, nor Sca-  
“ lenon, but *all and none* of these at  
“ once. In effect it is something imper-  
“ fect

“fect that cannot exist, an Idea where-  
“in some Parts of several different and  
“*inconsistent* Ideas are put together :  
“’Tis true the Mind in this imperfect  
“State has need of such Ideas, and makes  
“all the haste to them it can, for the con-  
“venience of Communication and En-  
“largement of Knowledge, to both  
“which it is naturally very much in-  
“clin’d. But yet one has reason to su-  
“spect such Ideas are Marks of our Im-  
“perfection. At least this is enough to  
“shew that the most abstract and ge-  
“neral Ideas are not those that the Mind  
“is first and most easily acquainted  
“with, nor such as its earliest Know-  
“lege is conversant about. B. 4. C. 7.  
§ 9. If any Man has the Faculty of  
framing in his Mind such an Idea of a  
Triangle as is here describ’d, it’s in vain  
to pretend to dispute him out of it, nor  
wou’d I go about it. All I desire is, that  
the Reader wou’d fully and certainly  
inform himself whether he has  
such an Idea or no. And this, methinks,  
can be no hard Task for any one to per-  
form. What more easy than for any one



to look a little into his own Thoughts, and there try whether he has, or can attain to have, an Idea that shall correspond with the description that is here given of the General Idea of a Triangle, which is, *neither Oblique nor Rectangle, Equilateral, Equicrural nor Scalenen, but all and none of these at once ?*

§ 14. Much is here said of the Difficulty that abstract Ideas carry with them, and the Pains and Skill requisite to the forming them. And it is on all Hands agreed that there is need of great Toil and Labour of the Mind, to Emancipate our Thoughts from particular Objects, and raise them to those Sublime Speculations that are conversant about abstract Ideas. From all which the natural Consequence shou'd seem to be, that so Difficult a thing as the forming abstract Ideas was not necessary for *Communication*, which is so easy and familiar to all sorts of Men. But we are told if they seem obvious and easy to Grown Men, 'Tis only because by constant and familiar use they are made so. Now I wou'd  
fain

fain know at what time it is, Men are imploy'd in surmounting that Difficulty, and furnishing themselves with those necessary helps for Discourse. It cannot be when they are grown up, for then it seems they are not conscious of any such Pains-taking; it remains therefore to be the business of their Childhood. And surely, the great and multiply'd Labour of framing abstract Notions will be found a hard Task for that tender Age. Is it not a hard thing to imagine that a couple of Children can't Prate together, of their Sugar-plumbs and Rattles and the rest of their little Trinkets, till they have first Tack'd together numberless Inconsistencies, and so framed in their Minds *abstract general Ideas*, and annexed them to every common Name they make use of?

§ 15. Nor do I think them a whit more needful for the *Enlargement of Knowledge* than for *Communication*. It is I know a Point much insisted on, that all Knowledge and Demonstration are about universal Notions, to which I fully

ly agree : But then it does not appear to me that those Notions are form'd by *Abstraction* in the manner premised, *Universality*, so far as I can comprehend, not consisting in the absolute, positive Nature or Conception of any thing, but in the relation it bears to the Particulars signified or represented by it : By vertue whereof it is that things, Names or Notions, being in their own Nature, *Particular* are render'd *Universal*. Thus when I demonstrate any Proposition concerning Triangles, it is to be supposed that I have in view the universal Idea of a Triangle; which ought not to be understood as if I cou'd frame an Idea of a Triangle which was neither Equilateral nor Scalenon, &c. But only that the particular Triangle I consider, whether of this or that sort it matters not, does equally stand for and represent all Rectilinear Triangles whatsoever, and is in that sense *Universal*. All which seems very Plain and not to include any Difficulty in it.



§ 16. But here it will be demanded, how we can know any Proposition to be true of all particular Triangles, except we have first seen it demonstrated of the abstract Idea of a Triangle which equally agrees to all? For because a Property may be demonstrated to agree to some one particular Triangle, it will not thence follow that it equally belongs to any other Triangle, which in all respects is not the same with it. For Example, Having demonstrated that the three Angles of an Isosceles, Rectangular Triangle are equal to two right Ones, I cannot therefore conclude this Affection agrees to all other Triangles, which have neither a right Angle, nor two equal Sides. It seems therefore that, to be certain this Proposition is universally true, we must either make a particular Demonstration for every particular Triangle, which is impossible, or once for all demonstrate it of the *abstract Idea of a Triangle*, in which all the Particulars do indifferently partake, and by which they are all equally represented.

ed. To which I answer, that tho' the Idea I have in view whilst I make the Demonstration be, for instance, that of an Ifofceles, Rectangular Triangle whose Sides are of a determinate Length, I may nevertheless be certain it extends to all other Rectilinear Triangles, of what Sort or Bigness soever. And that, because neither the right Angle, nor the equality, nor determinate Length of the Sides are at all concern'd in the Demonstration. 'Tis true, the Diagram I have in view includes all these Particulars, but then there's not the least mention made of 'em in the Proof of the Proposition. It is not said the three Angles are equal to two right Ones, because one of them is a right Angle, or because the Sides comprehending it are of the same Length. Which sufficiently shews that the right Angle might have been Oblique, and the Sides unequal, and for all that the Demonstration have held good. And for this reason it is, that I conclude that to be true of any Obliquangular or Scalenon, which I had demonstrated of a particular Right-angled, Equicrural Triangle

Triangle; and not because I demonstrated the Proposition of the abstract Idea of a Triangle.

§ 17. It were an endless, as well as an useless Thing, to trace the *Schoolmen*, those great Masters of abstraction, thro' all the manifold inextricable Labyrinths of Error and Dispute, which their Doctrine of abstract Natures and Notions seems to have led 'em into. What Bickerings and Controversies, and what a learned Dust have been raised about those Matters, and what mighty Advantage has been from thence deriv'd to Mankind are things at this Day too clearly known to need being insisted on. And it had been well if the ill effects of that Doctrine were confin'd to those only who make the most avow'd Profession of it. When Men consider the great Pains, Industry and Parts, that have for so many Ages been laid out on the Cultivation and Advancement of the Sciences, and that notwithstanding all this the far greater Part of them remain full of Darkness and Uncertainty, and Disputes, that

E

are



are like never to have an end, and even those that are thought to be supported by the most clear and cogent Demonstrations, contain in them Paradoxes which are perfectly irreconcilable to the Understandings of Men, and that taking altogether, a very small Portion of them does supply any real Benefit to Mankind, otherwise than by being an innocent Diversion and Amusement. I say, the Consideration of all this is apt to throw them into a Despondency, and perfect Contempt of all Study. But this may perhaps cease, upon a view of the false Principles that have obtain'd in the World, amongst all which there is none, methinks, hath a more wide and extended Sway over the Thoughts of Speculative Men, than that we have been endeavouring to overthrow.

§ 18. I come now to consider the Source of this prevailing Notion, and that seems to me to be Language. And surely nothing of less extent than Reason it self cou'd have been the Source of an Opinion so universally receiv'd.  
The

The truth of this appears as from other Reasons, so also from the plain Confession of the ablest Patrons of abstract Ideas, who acknowledge that they are made in order to naming, from which it is a clear Consequence that if there had been no such thing as Speech or Universal Signs, there never had been any thought of Abstraction. See B. 3. C. 6. § 39. *and elsewhere of the Essay on Human Understanding.* But let us examine the manner wherein Words have contributed to the Origine of that Mistake. First then, 'Tis thought that every Name has, or ought to have, one only precise and settled Signification, which inclines Men to think there are certain *abstract, determinate Ideas* that constitute the true and only immediate Signification of each general Name, And that it is by the mediation of these abstract Ideas, that a general Name comes to signifie any particular Thing. Whereas, in truth, there is no such thing as one precise and definite Signification annexed to any general Name, they all signifying indifferently a great number

of particular Ideas. All which does evidently follow from what has been already said, and will clearly appear to any one by a little Reflexion. To this, I doubt not, it will be objected that every Name that has a Definition is is thereby restrain'd to one certain Signification. *e. g.* a *Triangle* is defin'd to be a *plain Surface comprehended by three right Lines*; by which that Name is limited to denote one certain Idea and no other. To which I answer, that in the Definition it is not said whether the Surface be Great or Small, Black or White, &c. nor whether the Sides are Long or Short, Equal or Unequal, nor with what Angles they are inclin'd to each other, in all which there may be great variety, and consequently there is no one settled Idea which limits the Signification of the word *Triangle*. 'Tis one thing for to keep a Name constantly to the same Definition, and another to make it stand every where for the same Idea, the one is necessary, the other useless and impracticable.



§ 19. But to give a farther Account how Words came to produce the Doctrine of abstract Ideas, it must be observ'd that it's a receiv'd Opinion, that Language has no other End but the communicating our Ideas, and that every significant Name stands for an Idea. This being so, and it being withall certain, that Names, which yet are not thought altogether Insignificant, do not always mark out particular conceivable Ideas, it is straightway concluded that they stand for abstract Notions. That there are many Names in use amongst Speculative Men, which do not always suggest to others determinate, particular Ideas, or in truth any thing at all, is what no Body will deny. And a little Attention will discover, that it is not necessary (even in the strictest Reasonings) significant Names which stand for Ideas shou'd, every time they are us'd, excite in the Understanding the Ideas they are made to stand for: In Reading and Discoursing Names being for the most part used as Letters are in

*Algebra,*

*Algebra*, in which tho a particular quantity be mark'd by each Letter, yet to proceed right it is not requisite that in every step each Letter suggest to your Thoughts, that particular quantity it was appointed to stand for.

§ 20. Besides, the communicating of Ideas marked by Words is not the chief and only end of Language, as is commonly suppos'd. There are other Ends, as the raising of some Passion, the exciting to, or deterring from an Action, the putting the Mind in some particular Disposition; to which the former is in many Cases barely subservient, and sometimes entirely omitted, when these can be obtain'd without it, as I think does not infrequently happen in the familiar use of Language. I intreat the Reader to reflect with himself, and see if it does not oft happen either in Hearing or Reading a Discourse, that the Passions of Fear, Love, Hatred, Admiration, Disdain, &c. arise immediately in his Mind upon the perception of certain Words, without any Ideas coming between.

tween. At first, indeed, the Words might have occasion'd Ideas that were fitting to produce those Emotions; but, if I mistake not, it will be found that when Language is once grown familiar, the hearing of the Sounds or Sight of the Characters is oft immediately attended with those Passions, which at first were wont to be produced by the intervention of Ideas, that are now quite omitted. May we not, for Example, be affected with the promise of a *Good thing*, tho' we have not an Idea of what it is? Or is not the being threaten'd with Danger sufficient to excite a Dread, tho' we think not of any particular Evil likely to befall us, nor yet frame to ourselves an Idea of Danger in Abstract? If any one shall join ever so little Reflection of his own to what has been said, I believe it will evidently appear to him, that general Names are often used in the propriety of Language without the Speakers designing them for marks of Ideas in his own, which he wou'd have 'em raise in the Mind of the Hearer. Even proper Names themselves



selves do not seem always spoken, with a design to bring into our view the Ideas of those Individuals that are supposed to be marked by them. For Example, when a Schoolman tells me *Aristotle hath said it*, all I conceive he means by it, is to dispose me to embrace his Opinion with the Deference and Submission which Custom has annex'd to that Name. And this effect is oft so instantly produced in the Minds of those who are accustom'd to resign their Judgment to the Authority of that Philosopher, as it is impossible any Idea either of his Person, Writings, or Reputation shou'd go before. So close and immediate a Connexion may Custom establish, betwixt the very word *Aristotle* and the Motions of Assent and Reverence in the Minds of some Men. Innumerable Examples of this kind may be given, but why shou'd I insist on those things, which every one's Experience, will, I doubt not, plentifully suggest unto him?

§ 21. We have, I think, shewn the Impossibility of *abstract Ideas*. We have consider'd what has been said for them by their ablest Patrons; and endeavor'd to shew they are of no Use for those Ends, to which they are thought necessary. And lastly, we have traced them to the Source from whence they flow, which appears evidently to be Language. It cannot be deny'd that Words are of excellent Use, in that by their means all that Stock of Knowledge which has been purchas'd by the joint Labours of Inquisitive Men in all Ages and Nations, may be drawn into the view and made the possession of one single Person. But most parts of Knowledge have been so strangely perplex'd and darken'd by the abuse of Words, and general ways of Speech wherein they are deliver'd, that it may almost be made a Question whether Language, has contributed more to the hindrance or advancement of the Sciences. Since therefore Words are so apt to impose on the Understanding, I

F

am

We

am resolv'd in my Inquiries to make as little use of them as possibly I can. Whatever Ideas I consider, I shall endeavour to take them bare and naked into my View, keeping out of my Thoughts, so far as I am able, those Names which long and constant Use hath so strictly united with them; from which I may expect to derive the following Advantages.

§ 22. First, I shall be sure to get clear of all Controversies purely Verbal; the springing up of which weeds in almost all the Sciences has been a main Hindrance to the Growth of true and sound Knowledge. Secondly, this seems to be a sure way to extricate my self, out of that fine and subtile Net of *abstract Ideas*, which has so miserably perplex'd and entangled the Minds of Men, and that with this peculiar Circumstance, that by how much the finer and more curious was the Wit of any Man, by so much the deeper was he like to be ensnar'd, and faster held therein.



in. Thirdly, so long as I confine my Thoughts to my own Ideas divested of Words, I do not see how I can easily be mistaken. The Objects I consider, I clearly and adequately know. I cannot be deceiv'd in thinking I have an Idea which I have not. It is not possible for me to imagine, that any of my own Ideas are alike or unlike, that are not truly so. To discern the Agreements or Disagreements there are between my Ideas, to see what Ideas are included in any compound Idea, and what not, there is nothing more requisite, than an attentive Perception of what passes in my own Understanding.

§ 23. But the attainment of all these Advantages does presuppose an intire deliverance from the Deception of Words, which I dare hardly promise my self; so difficult a thing it is to dissolve an Union so early begun, and confirm'd by so long a Habit as that betwixt Words and Ideas. Which Difficulty seems to have been very much increas'd by the Do-

ctrine of *Abstraction*. For so long as Men thought abstract Ideas were annexed to their Words, it does not seem strange that they shou'd use Words for Ideas: It being found an impracticable thing to lay aside the Word, and retain the abstract Idea in the Mind, which in it self was perfectly inconceivable. This seems to me the principal Cause, why those Men who have so emphatically recommended to others, the laying aside all use of Words in their Meditations, and Contemplating their bare Ideas, have yet fail'd to perform it themselves. Of late many have been very sensible of the absurd Opinions and insignificant Disputes, which grow out of the abuse of Words. And in order to remedy these Evils they advise well, that we attend to the Ideas signified, and draw off our Attention, from the Words which signifie them. But how good soever this Advice may be, they have given others, it is plain they cou'd not have a due regard to it themselves, so long as they thought the only immediate use of Words was to  
signifie

signifie Ideas, and that the immediate signification of every general Name was a *determinate, abstract Idea*.

§ 24. But these being known to be Mistakes, a Man may with greater Ease prevent his being impos'd on by Words. He that knows he has no other than particular Ideas, will not puzzle himself in vain to find out and conceive the abstract Idea, annexed to any Name. And he that knows Names do not always stand for Ideas, will spare himself the labour of looking for Ideas, where there are none to be had. It were, therefore, to be wish'd that every one wou'd use his utmost Endeavors, to obtain a clear view of the Ideas he'd consider, separating from them all that dress and incumbrance of Words which so much contribute to blind the Judgment and divide the Attention. In vain do we extend our View into the Heavens, and pry into the Entrails of the Earth, in vain do we consult the Writings of Learned Men



Men, and trace the dark Foot-steps of Antiquity, we need only draw the Curtain of Words, to behold the fairest Tree of Knowledge, whose Fruit is excellent, and within the reach of our Hand.

§ 25. Unless we take care to clear the first Principles of Knowledge, from the embarras and delusion of Words, we may make infinite Reasonings upon them to no purpose; we may draw Consequences from Consequences, and be never the Wiser. The farther we go we shall only lose our selves the more irrecoverably, and be the deeper entangled in Difficulties and Mistakes. Whoever therefore designs to Read the following Sheets, I do Intreat him that he wou'd make my Words the Occasion of his own Thinking, and endeavour to attain the same Train of Thoughts in Reading, that I had in Writing them. By this means, it will be easy for him to discover the Truth or Falsity of what I say. He will be out of all danger  
of

of being deceiv'd by my Words, and  
I do not see how he can be led into  
an Error by considering his own Na-  
ked, undisguised Ideas.

---

O F

of being deceived by my Words and  
I do not see how he can be led into  
an Error by considering his own In-  
terest, and neglecting others.

S  
o  
th  
S  
at  
of  
by  
on  
ba  
ce  
I  
lo  
Va



---

OF THE  
**PRINCIPLES**  
OF  
Human Knowledge.

---

**PART I.**

---

§ 1. **I**T is evident to any one who takes a Survey of the Objects of Human Knowledge, that they are either Ideas actually imprinted on the Senses, or else such as are perceiv'd by attending to the Passions and Operations of the Mind, or lastly Ideas formed by help of Memory and Imagination; either compounding, dividing, or barely representing those originally perceiv'd in the aforesaid ways. By Sight I have the Ideas of Light and Colours with their several Degrees and Variations. By Touch I perceive Hard

G

and

and Soft, Heat and Cold, Motion and Resistance, &c. and of all these more and less either as to Quantity or Degree. Smelling furnishes me with Odors; the Palate with Tastes, and Hearing conveys Sounds to the Mind in all their variety of Tone and Composition. And as several of these are observ'd to accompany each other, they come to be marked by one Name, and so to be reputed as one Thing. Thus, for Example, a certain Colour, Taste, Smell, Figure and Consistence having been observ'd to go together, are accounted one distinct Thing, signified by the name *Apple*. Other Collections of Ideas constitute a Stone, a Tree, a Book and the like sensible Things; which as they are pleasing or disagreeable excite the Passions of Love, Hatred, Joy, Grief, &c.

§ 2. But besides all that endless variety of Ideas or Objects of Knowledge, there is likewise something which knows or perceives them, and exercises divers Operations, as Willing, Imagining, Remembering, &c. about them. This perceiving,

## Part I. of Human Knowledge. 43

ceiving, active Being is what I call *Mind*, *Spirit*, *Soul* or *my Self*. By which Words I do not denote any one of my Ideas, but a thing intirely distinct from them, wherein they Exist, or, which is the same thing, whereby they are Perceiv'd, for the Existence of an Idea consists in being Perceiv'd.

§ 3. That neither our Thoughts, nor Passions, nor Ideas formed by the Imagination, Exist without the Mind, is what every Body will allow. And to me it is no less evident that the various Sensations or Ideas imprinted on the Sense, however Blended or Combin'd together (that is whatever Objects they compose) cannot Exist otherwise than in a Mind perceiving them. I think an intuitive Knowledge may be obtain'd of this, by any one that shall attend to what is meant by the Term *Exist* when apply'd to sensible Things. The Table I Write on, I say, Exists, *i. e.* I See and Feel it, and if I were out of my Study I shou'd say it Existed, meaning thereby that if I was in my Study I might



44      *Of the Principles*      Part I.

perceive it, or that some other Spirit actually does perceive it. There was an Odor, *i. e.* it was Smelt; There was a Sound, *i. e.* it was Heard; a Colour or Figure and it was perceiv'd by Sight or Touch. This is all that I can understand by these and the like Expressions. For as to what is said of the Absolute Existence of unthinking Things without any relation to their being perceiv'd, that is to me perfectly Unintelligible. Their *Esse* is *Percipi*, nor is it possible they shou'd have any Existence, out of the Minds or thinking Things which perceive them.

§ 4. It is indeed an Opinion strangely prevailing amongst Men, that Houses, Mountains, Rivers and in a word all sensible Objects have an Existence Natural or Real, distinct from their being perceiv'd by the Understanding. But with how great an Assurance and Acquiescence soever, this Principle may be entertained in the World: Yet whoever shall find in his Heart to call it in Question may, if I mistake not, perceive  
it

Part I. of *Human Knowledge.* 45

it to involve a manifest Contradiction. For what are the foremention'd Objects but the things we perceive by Sense, and what, I pray you, do we perceive besides our own Ideas or Sensations, and is it not plainly repugnant that any one of these or any Combination of them shou'd Exist unperceiv'd?

§ 5. If we thoroughly examine this Tenent, it will, perhaps, be found at Bottom to depend on the Doctrine of *Abstract Ideas*. For can there be a nicer Strain of Abstraction then to distinguish the Existence of sensible Objects from their being Perceiv'd, so as to conceive them Existing Unperceiv'd? Light and Colours, Heat and Cold, Extension and Figures, in a word the Things we See and Feel what are they but so many Sensations, Notions, Ideas or Impressions on the Sense, and is it possible to separate, even in thought, any of these from Perception? For my part I might as easily divide a Thing from it Self. I may, indeed, divide in my Thoughts or conceive apart from each other those Things which

46      *Of the Principles*      Part I.

which, perhaps, I never perceiv'd by Sense so divided. Thus I imagine the Trunk of a Human Body without the Limbs, or conceive the Smell of a Rose without thinking on the Rose it self. So far I will not deny I can Abstract, if that may properly be called *Abstraction*, which extends only to the conceiving separately such Objects, as it is possible may really exist or be actually perceived afunder. But my conceiving or imagining Power does not extend beyond the possibility of real Existence or Perception. Hence as it is impossible for me to See or Feel any Thing without an actual Sensation of that Thing, so is it impossible for me to conceive in my Thoughts any sensible Thing or Object distinct from the Sensation or Perception of it. In truth the Object and the Sensation are the same thing, and cannot therefore be Abstracted from each other,

§ 6. Some Truths there are so near and obvious to the mind that a Man need only open his Eyes to see 'em, Such

take



Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 47

I. take this Important one to be, *viz.* that all the Choir of Heaven and Furniture of the Earth, in a word all those Bodies which compose the mighty Frame of the World, have not any Subsistence without a Mind, that their *Esse* is to be Perceiv'd or Known; that consequently so long as they are not actually Perceiv'd by Me, or do not Exist in my Mind or that of any other Created Spirit, they must either have no Existence at all, or else subsist in the Mind of some Eternal Spirit: It being perfectly unintelligible and involving all the Absurdity of Abstraction, to attribute to any single part of them an Existence independent of a Spirit. To make this appear with all the Light and Evidence of an Axiom, it seems sufficient if I can but awaken the Reflexion of the Reader, that he may take an impartial View of his own Meaning, and turn his Thoughts upon the Subject it self, free and disengaged from all Embarras of Words and Prepossession in favour of received Mistakes.

§ 7. From

§ 7. From what has been said, 'tis evident, there is not any other Substance than *Spirit* or that which perceives. But for the fuller Demonstration of this Point, let it be consider'd, the sensible Qualities are Colour, Figure, Motion, Smell, Taste, &c. i. e. the Ideas perceiv'd by Sense. Now for an Idea to Exist in an unperceiving Thing is a manifest Contradiction, for to have an Idea is all one as to perceive, that therefore wherein Colour, Figure, &c. Exist must perceive them; Hence 'tis clear there can be no unthinking Substance or *Substratum* of those Ideas.

§ 8. But say you, tho' the Ideas themselves do not Exist without the Mind yet there may be Things like them whereof they are Copies or Resemblances, which Things Exist without the Mind, in an unthinking Substance. I answer an Idea can be like nothing but an Idea, a Colour, or Figure, can be like nothing but another Colour or Figure. If we look but never so little into

I  
s e  
nce  
But  
this  
nfi  
Mo  
lea  
dea  
is a  
e an  
ere  
Ex  
lea  
and

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 49

our Thoughts, we shall find it impossible for us to conceive a Likeness except only between our Ideas. Again, I ask whether those suppos'd Originals or External Things, of which our Ideas are the Pictures or Representations, be themselves Perceivable or no? If they are, then they are Ideas and we have gain'd our Point; but if you say they are not, I appeal to any one whether it be Sense, to assert a Colour is like something which is invisible; Hard or Soft, like something which is Intangible, and so of the rest.

§ 9. Some there are who make a distinction betwixt *Primary* and *Secondary* Qualities : By the former, they mean Extension, Figure, Motion, Rest, Solidity or Impenetrability and Number : By the latter they denote all other Sensible Qualities as Colours, Sounds, Tastes, &c. the Ideas we have of these they acknowledge not to be the Resemblances, of any thing existing without the Mind or unperceiv'd, but they will have our Ideas of the Primary Qualities

H

to



to be Patterns or Images of things which exist without the Mind, in an unthinking Substance which they call *Matter*. By Matter, therefore, we are to understand an Inert, Senseless Substance, in which Extension, Figure, Motion, &c. do actually subsist, But it is evident from what we have already shewn, that Extension, Figure and Notion are only Ideas existing in the Mind, and that an Idea can be like nothing but another Idea. and that consequently neither They nor their Archetypes can Exist in an unperceiving Substance. Hence it is plain, that the very Notion of what is called *Matter* or *Corporeal Substance*, involves a Contradiction in it. Insomuch that I shou'd not think it necessary to spend more time in exposing it's Absurdity. But because the Tenent of the Existence of Matter seems to have taken so deep a Root in the Minds of Philosophers, and draws after it so many ill Consequences, I chuse rather to be thought Prolix and Tedious, than omit any thing that might conduce to the full Discovery and Extirpation of that Prejudice.

§ 10. They

Part I. of *Human Knowledge.* 51

§ 10. They who assert that Figure, Motion, and the rest of the Primary or Original Qualities do Exist without the Mind, in unthinking Substances, do at the same time acknowledge that Colours, Sounds, Heat, Cold, &c. do not, which they tell us are Sensations existing in the Mind alone, that depend on and are occasion'd by the different Size, Texture, Motion, &c. of the minute Particles of Matter. This they take for an undoubted Truth, which they can demonstrate beyond all Exception. Now if it be certain, that those Original Qualities are inseparably united with the other sensible Qualities, and not, even in Thought, capable of being Abstracted from them, it plainly follows that they Exist only in the Mind. But I desire any one to reflect and try, whether he can by any Abstraction of Thought, conceive the Extension and Motion of a Body, without all other sensible Qualities. For my own part, I see evidently that it is not in my power to frame an Idea of a Body Extended and Moving, but I must withal give it

some Colour or other sensible Quality which is acknowleg'd to Exist only in the Mind. In short, Extension, Figure, and Motion, abstracted from all other Qualities, are inconceivable. Where therefore the other sensible Qualities are, there must these be also, *i. e.* in the Mind and no where else.

§ II. Again, *Great* and *Small*, *Swift* and *Slow*, are allow'd to Exist no where without the Mind, being intirely relative and changing as the Frame or Position of the Organs of Sense varies. The Extension therefore which Exists without the Mind, is neither Great nor Small, the Motion, neither Swift nor Slow, that is, they are nothing at all. But say you they are Extension in General, and Motion in General : Thus we see how much the Tenent of extended, moveable Substances Existing without the Mind depends on that strange Doctrine of *Abstract Ideas*. And here I can't but remark, how nearly the Vague and indeterminate Description of Matter or Corporal Substance which the Modern Philosophers



**Part I. of Human Knowledge. 53**

losophers are run into by their own Principles, resembles that antiquated and so much ridicul'd Notion of *Materia Prima*, to be met with in *Aristotle* and his Followers. Without Extension Solidity cannot be conceiv'd; since therefore it has been shewn that Extension Exists not in an unthinking Substance, the same must also be true of Solidity.

§ 12. That Number is intirely the Creature of the Mind, even tho' the other Qualities be allow'd to Exist without, will be evident to whoever considers, that the same thing bears a different Denomination of Number, as the Mind views it with different respects, Thus, the same Extension is One or Three or Thirty Six, according as the Mind considers it with reference to a Yard, a Foot, or an Inch. Number is so visibly relative, and dependent on Mens Understanding, that it is strange to think how any one shou'd give it an absolute Existence without the Mind. We say one Book, one Page, one Line, &c. all these are equally Unites, tho' some

## 54 *Of the Principles* Part I.

some contain several of the others. And in each Instance 'tis plain, the Unite relates to some particular Combination of Ideas arbitrarily put together by the Mind.

§ 13. Unity I know some will have to be a simple or uncompounded Idea, accompanying all other Ideas into the Mind. That I have any such Idea answering the Word *Unity*, I do not find, and if I had, methinks, I cou'd not miss finding it, on the contrary it shou'd be the most familiar to my Understanding since it is said to accompany all other Ideas, and to be perceiv'd by all the ways of Sensation and Reflexion. To say no more it is an *abstract Idea*.

§ 14. I shall farther add, that after the same manner, as modern Philosophers prove Colours, Tastes, &c. to have no Existence in Matter, or without the Mind, the same thing may be likewise prov'd of all other sensible Qualities whatsoever. Thus, for Instance, it is said that Heat and Cold, are Affections only of the Mind, and not at all

**Part I. of Human Knowledge. 55**

all Patterns of real Beings, existing in the Corporeal Substances which excite them, for that the same Body which appears Cold to one Hand, seems Warm to another. Now why may we not as well argue that Figure and Extension, are not Patterns or Resemblances of Qualities existing in Matter, because to the same Eye at different Stations, or Eyes of a different Texture at the same Station, they appear various, and cannot therefore be the Images of any thing settled and determinate without the Mind? again, 'Tis prov'd that Sweetness is not really in the Sapid Thing, because the thing remaining unalter'd the Sweetness is changed into Bitter, as in case of a Fever or otherwise vitiated Palate. Is it not as reasonable to say, that Motion is not without the Mind, since if the Succession of Ideas in the Mind become Swifter, the Motion, it is acknowledg'd, shall appear Slower without any external Alteration.

§ 15. In short, let any one consider those Arguments, which are thought manifestly



manifestly to prove that Colours, Tastes, &c. Exist only in the Mind, and he shall find they may with equal force, be brought to prove the same thing of Extension, Figure, and Motion. Tho' it must be confess'd this method of Arguing does not so much prove that there is no Extension, Colour, &c. in an outward Object, as that we do not know by Sense which is the true Extension or Colour of the Object. But the Arguments foregoing plainly shew it to be impossible that any Colour or Extension at all, or other sensible Quality whatsoever, shou'd Exist in an unthinking Subject without the Mind, or in truth, that there shou'd be any such thing as an outward Object.

§ 16. But let us examine a little the receiv'd Opinion: It is said Extension is a mode or accident of Matter, and that Matter is the *Substratum* that supports it. Now I desire that you wou'd explain to me what is meant by Matter's *supporting* Extension: Say you, I have no Idea of Matter and therefore cannot

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 57

cannot explain it. I answer, tho' you have no positive, yet if you have any meaning at all, you must at least have a Relative Idea of Matter; tho' you know not what it is, yet you must be supposed to know what Relation it bears to Accidents, and what is meant by its supporting them. 'Tis evident *Support* cannot here be taken in its usual or literal Sense, as when we say that Pillars support a Building; in what Sense therefore must it be taken? For my part I am not able to discover any Sense at all that can be applicable to it.

§ 17. If we inquire into what the most accurate Philosophers declare themselves to mean by *Material Substance*; we shall find them acknowledge, they have no other meaning annexed to those Sounds, but the Idea of Being in general, together with the Relative Notion of its supporting Accidents. The general Idea of Being appeareth to me the most abstract and incomprehensible of all other, and as for its supporting Accidents, this, as we have just now ob-

serv'd, cannot be understood in the common Sense of those Words, it must therefore be taken in some other Sense, but what that is they do not explain. So that when I consider the two Parts or Branches which make the signification of the Words *Material Substance*, I am convinced there is no distinct meaning annexed to them. But why shou'd we trouble our selves any farther, in discussing this *Material Substratum* or Support of Figure and Motion, &c. does it not suppose they have an Existence without the Mind? And is not this a direct Repugnancy and altogether Inconceivable?

§ 18. But tho' it were possible that solid, Figur'd moveable Substances may Exist without the Mind, corresponding to the Ideas we have of Bodies, yet how is it possible for us to know this? Either we must know it by Sense or by Reason. As for our Senses, by them we have the Knowledge only of our Sensations, Ideas, or those things that are immediately perceiv'd by Sense, call 'em what



I. Part I. of Human Knowledge. 59

what you will : But they do not inform us that things Exist without the Mind, or unperceiv'd, like to those which are perceiv'd. This the Materialists themselves acknowledge. It remains therefore that if we have any Knowledge at all of External Things, it must be by Reason, inferring their Existence from what is immediately perceiv'd by Sense. But I do not see what reason can induce us to believe the Existence of Bodies without the Mind, from what we perceive, since the very Patrons of Matter themselves do not pretend, there is any necessary Connexion betwixt them and our Ideas. I say it is granted on all Hands (and what happens in Dreams, Frenzys and the like puts it beyond dispute) that it is possible we might be affected with all the Ideas we have now, tho' there were no Bodies Existing without resembling them. Hence it is evident the Supposition of External Bodies is not necessary for the producing our Ideas : Since it is granted they are produced sometimes, and might possibly be produced always in

the same Order, we see them in at present, without their Concurrence.

§ 19. But, tho' we might possibly have all our Sensations without them, yet perhaps it may be thought easier to conceive and explain the manner of their Production, by supposing External Bodies in their likeness rather than otherwise, and so it might be at least probable there are such things as Bodies that excite their Ideas in our Minds. But neither can this be said, for tho' we give the Materialists their External Bodies, they by their one confession are never the nearer knowing how our Ideas are produced: Since they own themselves unable to comprehend in what manner Body can act upon Spirit, or how it is possible it shou'd imprint any Idea in the Mind. Hence it is evident the Production of Ideas or Sensations in our Minds, can be no reason why we shou'd suppose Matter or Corporeal Substances, since that is acknowleg'd to remain equally inexplicable with, or without this Supposition. If therefore it were possible for  
Bodies

I. **Part I. of Human Knowledge. 61**

Bodies to Exist without the Mind, yet to hold they do so, must needs be a very precarious Opinion; since it is to suppose, without any reason at all, that God has Created innumerable Beings that are intirely uselefs, and serve to no manner of purpose.

§ 20. In short, tho' there were External Bodies, 'tis impossible we shou'd ever come to know it; and if there were not, we shou'd have the very same Reasons to think there were that we have now. Suppose, what no one can deny possible, an Intelligence to be affected with the same train of Sensations or Ideas that you are, imprinted in the same order and with like vividness in his Mind. I ask whether that Intelligence hath not all the Reason to believe the Existence of Corporeal Substances, represented by his Ideas, and exciting them in his Mind, that you can possibly have for believing the same thing? Of this there can be no Question, which one Consideration were enough to make any reasonable Person, suspect the strength of whatever Arguments



Arguments he may think himself to have, for the Existence of Bodies without the Mind.

§ 21. Where it necessary to add any farther Proof against the Existence of Matter, after what has been said, I cou'd instance several of those Errours and Difficulties (not to mention Impieties) which have sprung from that Tenent. It has occasion'd numberless Controversies and Disputes in Philosophy, and not a few of far greater moment in Religion. But I shall not enter into the detail of them in this Place, as well because I think, Arguments *a Posteriori* are unnecessary for confirming what has been, if I mistake not, sufficiently demonstrated *a Priori*, as because I shall hereafter find occasion to speak somewhat of them.

§ 22. I am affraid I have given cause to think, I am needlessly Prolix in handling this Subject. For to what purpose is it to dilate on that which may be demonstrated with the utmost Evidence  
in

Part I. of *Human Knowledge.* 63

in a Line or Two, to any one that's capable of the least Reflexion ? It is but looking into your own Thoughts, and so trying whether you can conceive it possible for a Sound, or Figure, or Motion, or Colour to Exist without the Mind, or Unperceiv'd. This easy Tryal may perhaps make you see, that what you contend for, is a downright Contradiction. Insomuch that I am content to put the whole upon this Issue ; if you can but conceive it possible for one Extended, moveable Substance, or in general, for any one Idea or any thing like an Idea to Exist otherwise than in a Mind perceiving it, I shall readily give up the Cause : And as for all that *com-*pages of External Bodies you contend for, I shall grant you its Existence, tho' you cannot either give me any Reason why you believe it Exists, or assign any use to it when it is supposed to Exist. I say, the bare possibility of your Opinions being true, shall pass for an Argument that it is so.

§ 23. But

§ 23. But say you, surely there's nothing easier than for me to imagine Trees, for Instance, in a Park, or Books Existing in a Closet, and no Body by to perceive them. I answer you may so, there is no difficulty in it : But what is all this, I beseech you, more than framing in your Mind certain Ideas which you call *Books* and *Trees*, and at the same time omitting to frame the Idea of any one that may perceive them ? But do not you your self Perceive or Think of them all the while ? This therefore is nothing to the purpose : It only shews you have the power of Imagining or Forming Ideas in your Mind ; but it does not shew that you can conceive it possible, the Objects of your Thought may Exist without the Mind ; to make out this, it is necessary that you conceive them Existing unconceiv'd or unthought of, which is a manifest Repugnancy. When we do our utmost to conceive the Existence of External Bodies, we are all the while only Contemplating our own Ideas. But the Mind taking no notice of  
of



I. Part I. of Human Knowledge. 65

of it self, is deluded to think it can and does conceive Bodies Existing unthought of or without the Mind; tho' at the same time they are apprehended by or Exist in it self. A little Attention will discover to any one the Truth and Evidence of what is here said, and make it unnecessary to insist on any other Proofs against the Existence of Material Substance.

§ 24. Cou'd Men but forbear to amuse themselves with Words, we shou'd I believe, soon come to an Agreement in this Point. It is very obvious upon the least inquiry into our own Thoughts, to know whether it be possible for us to understand what is meant, by the *absolute Existence of sensible Objects in themselves, or without the Mind*. To me 'tis evident those Words mark out either a direct Contradiction, or else nothing at all. And to convince others of this, I know no readier or fairer way, than to intreat they wou'd calmly attend to their own Thoughts: And if by this Attention, the Emptiness or Repugnancy of

K

those

those Expressions does appear, surely nothing more is requisite for their Conviction. 'Tis on this therefore that I insist, *viz.* that the absolute Existence of unthinking Things are Words without a Meaning, or which include a Contradiction. This is what I repeat and inculcate, and earnestly recommend to the attentive Thoughts of the Reader.

§ 25. All our Ideas, Sensations, Notions or the things which we perceive by whatsoever Names they may be distinguish'd, are visibly Inactive, there is nothing of Power or Agency included in them. So that one Idea or Object of Thought cannot Produce, or make any Alteration in another. To be satisfied of the Truth of this, there is nothing else requisite but a bare Observation of our Ideas. For since they and every part of them Exist only in the Mind, it follows that there is nothing in them but what is Perceiv'd: But whoever shall attend to his Ideas, whether of Sense or Reflexion, will not perceive in them any Power or Activity, there is, therefore, no  
such

I. Part I. of *Human Knowledge*, 67

such thing contained in them. A little Attention will discover to us that the very Being of an Idea implies Passiveness and Inertness in it, insomuch that it is impossible for an Idea to do any thing, or, strictly speaking, to be the Cause of any thing: Neither can it be the Resemblance or Pattern of any active Being, as is evident from *Sect. VIII.* Whence it plainly follows that Extension, Figure and Motion, cannot be the Cause of our Sensations. To say, therefore, that these are the effects of Powers resulting from the Configuration, Number, Motion, Size, &c. of Corpuscles must certainly be false.

§ 26. We perceive a continual Succession of Ideas, some are anew Excited, others are Changed or totally Disappear. There is therefore some Cause of these Ideas whereon they depend, and which produces and changes them. That this Cause cannot be any Quality or Idea or Combination of Ideas, is clear from the preceding Section. It must therefore be a Substance, but it has been shewn that



68      *Of the Principles*      Part I.

there is no Corporeal or Material Substance : It remains therefore that the Cause of Ideas is an Incorporeal, active Substance or Spirit.

§ 27. A Spirit is one Simple, Undivided, active Being, as it perceives Ideas, it is called the *Understanding*, and as it produces or otherwise operates about them, it is called the *Will*. Hence there can be no Idea formed of a Soul or Spirit : For all Ideas whatever, being Passive and Inert, *vid. Sect. XXV*, they cannot represent unto us, by way of Image or Likeness, that which Acts. A little Attention will make it plain to any one, that to have an Idea which shall be like that active Principle of Motion and Change of Ideas, is absolutely impossible. Such is the Nature of *Spirit* or that which Acts, that it cannot be of it self Perceived, but only by the Effects which it produceth. If any Man shall doubt of the Truth of what is here delivered, let him but reflect and try if he can frame the Idea of any Power or active Being ; and whether he has Ideas  
of

I. Part I. of Human Knowledge. 69

of two Principal Powers, mark'd by the Names *Will* and *Understanding*, distinct from each other as well as from a third Idea of Substance or Being in general, with a relative Notion of its supporting or being the Subject of the aforesaid Powers, which is signified by the Name *Soul* or *Spirit*. This is what some hold ; but so far as I can see, the Words *Will*, *Understanding*, *Mind*, *Soul*, *Spirit*, do not stand for different Ideas, or in truth, for any Idea at all, but for Something which is very different from Ideas, and which being an Agent cannot be like unto, or represented by, any Idea whatsoever.

§ 28. I find I can Excite Ideas in my Mind at pleasure, and vary and shift the Scene as oft as I think fit. 'Tis no more than Willing, and straightway this or that Idea arises in my Fancy : And by the same Power it is obliterated, and makes way for another. This making and unmaking of Ideas doth very properly denominate the Mind Active. Thus

Thus much is certain, and grounded on Experience : But when we talk of unthinking Agents, or of exciting Ideas exclusive of Volition, we only amuse our selves with Words.

§ 29. But whatever Power I may have over my own Thoughts, I find the Ideas actually perceiv'd by Sense have not a like Dependence on my Will. When in broad Day-light I open my Eyes, 'tis not in my Power to chuse whether I shall See or no, or to determine what particular Objects shall present themselves to my View ; And so likewise as to the Hearing and other Senses, the Ideas imprinted on them are not Creatures of my Will. There is therefore some other Will or Spirit that produces them.

§ 30. The Ideas of Sense are more strong, lively and distinct than those of the Imagination, they have likewise a Steadiness, Order and Coherence, and are not excited at Random, as those which are the effects of Human Wills, often



Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 71

often are, but in a regular Train or Series, the admirable Connexion whereof sufficiently testifies the Wisdom and Benevolence of its Author. Now the set Rules or establish'd Methods, wherein the Mind we depend on excites in us the Ideas of Sense, are called the *Laws of Nature*: And these we learn by Experience, which teaches us that such and such Ideas are attended with such and such other Ideas, in the ordinary course of Things.

§ 31. This gives us a sort of Foresight, which enables us to regulate our Actions for the benefit of Life. And without this we shou'd be eternally at a loss, we cou'd not know how to act any thing that might procure us the least Pleasure, or remove the least Pain of Sense. That Food Nourishes, Sleep Refreshes, and Fire Warms us; that to Sow in the Seed-time is the way to Reap in the Harvest, and, in general, that to obtain such or such Ends, such or such Means are conducive, all this we know, not by discovering any necessary

cessary Connexion between our Ideas, but only by the Observation of the settled Laws of Nature, without which we shou'd be all in Uncertainty and Confusion, and a grown Man no more know how to manage himself in the Affairs of Life, than an Infant just Born.

§ 32. And yet this consistent, uniform Working which so evidently displays the Goodness and Wisdom of that Governing Spirit whose Will constitutes the Laws of Nature, is so far from leading our Thoughts to Him, that it rather sends 'em a wandering after second Causes. For when we perceive certain Ideas of Sense constantly follow'd by other Ideas, and we know this is not of our own doing, we forthwith attribute Power and Agency to the Ideas themselves, and make one the Cause of another, than which nothing can be more Absurd and Unintelligible. Thus, for Example, having observ'd that when we perceive by Sight a certain round, luminous Figure, we at the same time perceive by Touch the Idea or Sensation called

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 73

called *Heat*, we do from thence conclude the Sun to be the cause of *Heat*. And in like manner perceiving the Motion and Collision of Bodies to be attended with Sound, we are inclined to think the latter the effect of the former.

§ 33. The Ideas imprinted on the Senses by the Author of Nature are called *real things*, and those excited in the Imagination being less Regular, Vivid and Constant, are more properly termed *Ideas*, or *Images of Things*, which they copy and represent. But then our Sensations, be they never so Vivid and Distinct, are nevertheless *Ideas*, *i. e.* they Exist in the Mind, or are perceived by it, as truly as the Ideas of its own framing. The Ideas of Sense are allow'd to have more reality in them, *i. e.* to be more Strong, Orderly and Coherent than the Creatures of the Mind; but this is no Argument that they Exist without the Mind. They are also less dependent on the Spirit, or thinking Substance which perceives them, in that they are excited by the Will of another

L



74 *Of the Principles* Part I.

nother and more Powerful Spirit : yet still they are *Ideas*, and certainly no *Idea*, whether Faint or Strong, can Exist otherwise than in a Mind perceiving it.

§ 34. Before we proceed any farther, it is necessary we spend some Time in Answering Objections which may probably be made against the Principles we have hitherto laid down. In doing of which, if I seem too Prolix to those of quick Apprehensions, I desire I may be excused, since all Men do not equally apprehend things of this Nature ; and I am willing to be understood by every one. First, then, it will be objected that by the foregoing Principles, all that is real and substantial in Nature is banish'd out of the World : And instead thereof a Chimerical Scheme of Ideas takes place. All things that Exist, Exist only in the Mind, that is, they are purely Notional. What therefore becomes of the Sun, Moon and Stars ? What must we think of Houses, Rivers, Mountains, Trees, Stones ; nay, even of our own Bodies ? Are all these  
but

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 75

but so many Chimeras and Illusions on the Fancy? To all which, and whatever else of the same sort may be objected, I Answer, that by the Principles premis'd, we are not deprived of any one thing in Nature. Whatever we See, Feel, Hear, or any wise Conceive or Understand, remains as secure as ever, and is as real as ever. There is a *rerum natura*, and the Distinction between Realities and Chimeras retains its full force. This is evident from *Sect.* XXIX, XXX, and XXXIII, where we have shewn what is meant by *real Things* in opposition to *Chimeras*, or Ideas of our own framing; but then they both equally Exist in the Mind, and in that Sense are alike *Ideas*.

§ 35. I do not Argue against the Existence of any one thing that we can apprehend, either by Sense or Reflexion, That the things I see with my Eyes and touch with my Hands do Exist, really Exist, I make not the least Question, The only thing whose Existence we deny, is that which Philosophers call Mat-

ter or Corporeal Substance. And in doing of this, there is no Damage done to the rest of Mankind, who, I dare say, will never miss it. The Atheist, indeed, will want the Colour of an empty Name to support his Impiety ; and the Philosophers may possibly find, they have lost a great Handle for Trifling and Disputation. But that's all the Harm that I can see done.

§ 36. If any Man thinks we detract from the Existence or Reality of things, he is very far from Understanding what has been premis'd in the plainest Terms I cou'd think of. Take here an Abstract of what has been said. There are Spiritual Substances, Minds or Human Souls which will or excite Ideas in themselves at pleasure : but these are faint, weak, and unsteady in respect of others they perceive by Sense, which being impress'd upon them according to certain Rules or Laws of Nature, speak themselves the effects of a Mind more powerful and wise than Human Spirits. These latter are said to have more *Reality*



Part I. of Human Knowledge. 77

ality in them than the former: By which is meant that they are more affecting, orderly and distinct, and that they are not Fictions of the Mind perceiving them. And in this Sense, the Sun that I see by Day is the real Sun, and that which I imagine by Night is the Idea of the former. In the Sense here given of *Reality*, 'tis evident that every Vegetable, Star, Mineral, and in general each part of the Mundane System, is as much a *Real Being* by our Principles as by any other. Whether others mean any thing by the Term *Reality* different from what I do, I intreat them to look into their own thoughts and see.

§ 37. It will be urg'd that thus much at least is true, *viz.* that we take away all Corporeal Substances. To this my Answer is, That if the word *Substance* be taken in the vulgar Sense, for a Combination of Sensible Qualities, such as Extension, Solidity, Weight, &c. This we cannot be accused of taking away. But if it be taken in a Philosophic Sense, for the support of Accidents or Qualities

78 *Of the Principles* Part I.

ties without the Mind: then, indeed, I acknowledge that we take it away, if one may be said to take away that which never had any Existence, not even in the Imagination.

§ 38. But after all, say you, it sounds very harsh to say we Eat and Drink Ideas, and are Cloathed with Ideas. I acknowledge it does so, the word *Idea* not being used in common Discourse to signify the several Combinations of sensible Qualities, which are called *Things*: and it is certain that any Expression which varies from the familiar Use of Language will seem harsh and ridiculous. But this does not concern the Truth of the Proposition, which in other Words is no more than this, *viz.* we are Fed and Cloathed with those Things which we perceive immediately by our Senses. The Hardness or Softness, the Colour, Taste, Warmth, Figure, &c. which combin'd together constitute the several sorts of Victuals and Apparel, have been shewn to Exist only in the Mind that perceives them; and

Part I. of Human Knowledge. 79

and this is all that's meant by calling 'em *Ideas*, which Word if it was as ordinarily used as *Thing*, wou'd sound no Harsher nor more Ridiculous than it. I am not for disputing about the Propriety, but the Truth of the Expression. If therefore you agree with me that we Eat, and Drink, and are Clad with the immediate Objects of Sense which cannot Exist unperceiv'd or without the Mind : I shall readily grant it is more proper or conformable to Custom, that they shou'd be called Things rather than Ideas.

§ 39. If it be demanded why I make use of the word *Idea*, and do not rather in compliance with Custom call them Things. I answer, I do it for two Reasons : First, because the Term *Thing*, in contradistinction to *Idea*, is generally supposed to denote somewhat Existing, without the Mind ; Secondly, because *Thing* hath a more comprehensive Signification than *Idea*, including Spirits or thinking Things as well as Ideas. Since therefore the Objects of Sense



80      *Of the Principles*      Part I.

Sense Exist only in the Mind, and are withal thoughtless and inactive, I chose to mark them by the word *Idea* which implies those Properties.

§ 40. But say what we can, some one perhaps may be apt to Reply, he will still believe his Senses, and never suffer any Arguments, how plausible soever, to prevail over the Certainty of them. Be it so, assert the Evidence of Sense as high as you please, we are willing to do the same. That what I See, Hear and Feel doth Exist, *i. e.* is perceived by me, I no more doubt than I do of my own Being. But I do not see how the Testimony of Sense can be alleg'd, as a proof for the Existence of any Thing, which is not perceiv'd by Sense. We are not for having any Man turn *Sceptic*, and disbelieve his Senses; on the contrary we give them all the Stress and Assurance imaginable; nor are there any Principles more opposite to Scepticism, than those we have laid down, as shall be hereafter clearly shewn.

§ 41. Secondly,

I. Part I. of *Human Knowledge.* 81

§ 41. Secondly, It will be objected that there is a great difference betwixt real Fire, for Instance, and the Idea of Fire, betwixt dreaming or imagining ones self Burnt, and actually being so : If you suspect it to be only the Idea of Fire which you see, do but put your Hand into it, and you'll be convinced with a witness. This and the like may be urged in opposition to our Tenents. To all which the Answer is evident from what hath been already said, and I shall only add in this place, that if real Fire be very different from the Idea of Fire, so also is the real Pain that it occasions, very different from the Idea of the same Pain, and yet no Body will pretend that real Pain either is, or can possibly be, in an unperceiving Thing or without the Mind, any more than its Idea.

§ 42. Thirdly, It will be objected that we see things actually without or at a distance from us, and which consequently do not Exist in the Mind, it being absurd that those Things, which  
M are

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 82

are seen at the Distance of several Miles, shou'd be as near to us as our own Thoughts. In answer to this, I desire it may be consider'd that in a Dream we do oft perceive Things, as Existing at a great distance off, and yet for all that, those Things are acknowleg'd to have their Existence only in the Mind.

§ 43. But for the fuller clearing of this Point, it may be worth while to consider, how it is that we perceive Distance and Things placed at a Distance by Sight. For that we shou'd in truth see External Space, and Bodies actually Existing in it, some nearer, others farther off, seems to carry with it some Opposition to what hath been said, of their Existing no where without the Mind. The Consideration of this Difficulty it was, that gave birth to my *Essay towards a new Theory of Vision*, which was publish'd not long since. Wherein it is shewn that *Distance* or Outness is neither immediately of it self perceived by Sight, nor yet apprehended or judged of by Lines and Angles, or any thing



83 *Of the Principles* Part I.

thing that hath a necessary Connexion with it: But that it is only suggested to our Thoughts, by certain visible Ideas and Sensations attending Vision, which in their own Nature have no manner of Similitude or Relation, either with Distance, or Things placed at a Distance. But by a Connexion taught us by Experience, they came to signify and Suggest them to us, after the same manner that Words of any Language Suggest the Ideas they are made to stand for. Insomuch that a Man Born Blind, and afterwards made to see, wou'd not, at first Sight, think the things he saw to be without his Mind, or at any Distance from him. *vid. Sect. XLI. of the fore-mentioned Treatise,*

§ 44. The Ideas of Sight and Touch make two Species, intirely distinct and heterogeneous. The former are Marks and Prognostics of the latter. That the proper Objects of Sight neither Exist without the Mind, nor are the Images of External Things, was shewn even in that Treatise. Tho' throughout the

M 2

same

same, the contrary be supposed true of Tangible Objects: Not that to suppose that Vulgar Error, was necessary for establishing the Notion therein laid down, but because it was beside my Purpose to Examine and Refute it in a Discourse concerning *Vision*. So that in strict Truth the Ideas of Sight, when we apprehend by them Distance and Things placed at a Distance, do not Suggest or mark out to us Things actually Existing at a Distance, but only admonish us what Ideas of Touch will be imprinted in our Minds at such and such distances of Time, and in consequence of such or such Actions. It is, I say, evident from what has been said in the foregoing Parts of this Treatise, and in *Sect. CXLVII* and elsewhere of the Essay concerning *Vision*, that Visible Ideas are the Language whereby the governing Spirit, on whom we depend, informs us what Tangible Ideas he is about to imprint upon us, in case we Excite this or that Motion in our own Bodies. But for a fuller Information in this Point, I refer to the Essay it self.

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 85

§ 45. Fourthly, It will be object-  
ed that from the foregoing Principles  
it follows, Things are every mo-  
ment annihilated and created anew,  
The Objects of Sense Exist only when  
they are Perceived: The Trees therefore  
are in the Garden, or the Chairs in the  
Parlour, no longer than while there is  
some Body by to perceive them. Up-  
on shutting my Eyes all the Furniture  
in the Room is reduc'd to nothing, and  
barely upon opening 'em it is again  
created. In answer to all which, I re-  
fer the Reader to what has been said in  
*Sect. III, IV, &c.* and desire he will con-  
sider whether he means any thing, by  
the actual Existence of an Idea, distinct  
from its being perceiv'd. For my part  
after the nicest Inquiry I cou'd make,  
I am not able to discover that any thing  
else is meant by those Words. And I  
once more intreat the Reader to found  
his own Thoughts, and not suffer him-  
self to be imposed on by Words. If  
he can conceive it possible either for his  
Ideas or their Archetypes to Exist with-  
out



Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 86

out being perceived, then I give up the Cause: But if he cannot, he will acknowledge it is unreasonable for him to stand up in Defence of he knows not what, and pretend to charge on me as an Absurdity, the not assenting to those Propositions which at Bottom have no meaning in them.

§ 46. It will not be amiss to observe, how far the receiv'd Principles of Philosophy are themselves chargeable with those pretended Absurdities. It is thought strangely Absurd that upon closing my Eye-lids, all the Visible Objects round me shou'd be reduced to nothing ; and yet is not this what Philosophers commonly acknowledge, when they agree on all Hands that Light and Colours, which alone are the proper and immediate Objects of Sight, are meer Sensations that Exist no longer than they are perceiv'd ? Again it may to some perhaps seem very incredible, that things shou'd be every moment creating, yet this very Notion is commonly taught in the Schools. For the  
*Schools*

*Schoolmen*, tho' they acknowledge the Existence of Matter and that the whole mundane Fabrick is framed out of it, are nevertheless of Opinion that it cannot subsist without the Divine Conservation, which by them is expounded to be a continual Creation.

§ 47. Farther, a little Thought will discover to us, that tho' we allow the Existence of Matter or Corporeal Substance, yet it will unavoidably follow from the principles which are now generally admitted, that the Particular Bodies of what kind soever do none of them Exist whilst they are not perceived. For it is evident from *Señ. XI*, &c. that the Matter Philosophers contend for is an incomprehensible Something which hath none of those particular Qualities, whereby the Bodies falling under our Senses are distinguished one from another. But to make this more plain, it must be remarked that the Infinite Divisibility of Matter is now universally allow'd, at least by the most approv'd and considerable Philosophers,

88 *Of the Principles* Part I.

sophers, who on the receiv'd Principles demonstrate it beyond all exception. Hence it follows, there is an infinite number of Parts in each Particle of Matter, which are not perceiv'd by Sense. The reason, therefore, that any particular Body seems to be of a finite Magnitude, or exhibits only a finite number of Parts to Sense, is, not because it contains no more, since in it self it contains an infinite number of Parts, but because the Sense is not acute enough to discern them. In proportion therefore as the Sense is render'd more acute, it perceives a greater number of Parts in the Object *i. e.* the Object appears greater, and its Figure varies, those Parts in its Extremities which were before unperceivable, appearing now to bound it in very different Lines and Angles from those perceived by an obtuser Sense. And at length, after various changes of Size and Shape, when the Sense becomes infinitely acute, the Body shall seem infinite. During all which there is no alteration in the Body, but only in the Sense. Each Body, therefore



I. Part I. of Human Knowledge. 89

therefore, consider'd in it self is infinitely extended, and consequently void of all Shape or Figure. From which it follows that tho' we shou'd grant the Existence of Matter to be never so certain, yet it is withal as certain, the Materialists themselves are by their own Principles forced to acknowledge, that neither the particular Bodies perceived by Sense, nor any thing like them Exists without the Mind. Matter, I say, and each Particle thereof is according to them Infinite and Shapeless, and it is the Mind that frames all that variety of Bodies which compose the visible World, any one whereof does not Exist longer than it is perceiv'd.

§ 48. But after all, if we consider the Objection proposed in *Sect. XLV*; will not be found reasonably charg'd on the Principles we have premised, so as in truth to make any Ojection at all against our Notions. For tho' we hold indeed the Objects of Sense to be nothing else but Ideas which cannot Exist unperceiv'd: yet we may not hence con-

N

clude

clude they have no Existence except only while they are perceiv'd by us, since there may be some other Spirit that perceives them tho' we do not. Wherever Bodies are said to have no Existence without the Mind, I wou'd not be understood to mean this or that particular Mind, but all Minds whatsoever. It does not therefore follow from the foregoing Principles, that Bodies are annihilated and created every moment, or Exist not at all during the Intervals between our perception of them.

§ 49. Fifthly, it may perhaps be objected, that if Extension and Figure exist only in the Mind, it follows that the Mind is extended and figured; since Extension is a Mode or Attribute which (to speak with the Schools) is predicated of the Subject in which it Exists. In answer, Those qualities are in the Mind only as they are perceiv'd by it, that not by way of *Mode* or *Attribute* but only by way of *Idea*, and it no more follows the Soul or Mind is extended by

cau

I. Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 91

cause Extension Exists in it alone, than it does that it is Red or Blue because those Colours are on all Hands acknowledged to Exist in it, and no where else. As to what Philosophers say of Subject and Mode, that seems very groundless and unintelligible. For instance, in this Proposition, a Die is Hard, Extended and Square, they will have it that the word *Die* denotes a Subject or Substance, distinct from the Hardness, Extension, and Figure which are predicated of it, and in which they Exist. This I can't comprehend : To me a Die seems to be nothing distinct from those things which are termed its Modes or Accidents. And to say a Die is Hard, Extended and Square, is not to attribute those Qualities to a subject distinct from and supporting them, but only an Explication of the meaning of the word *Die*.

§ 50. Sixthly, you'll say there have been a great many things explain'd by Matter and Motion, take away these and you destroy the whole Corpuscular



Philosophy, and undermine those Mechanical Principles which have been applied with so much success to account for the *Phænomena*. In short, whatever Advances have been made, either by Ancient or Modern Philosophers, in the Study of Nature do all proceed on the Supposition, that Corporeal Substance or Matter doth really Exist. To this, I answer, that there is not any one *Phænomenon* explain'd on that Supposition, which may not as well be explain'd without it, as might easily be made appear by an induction of Particulars. To Explain the *Phænomena*, is all one as to shew why upon such and such Occasions, we are affected with such and such Ideas. But how Matter shou'd Operate on a Spirit, or produce any Idea in it, is what no Philosopher will pretend to explain. It is therefore evident, there can be no use of Matter in Natural Philosophy. Besides, they who attempt to account for Things, do it, not by Corporeal Substance but, by Figure, Motion, &c. which are in truth no more than meer Ideas, and therefore cannot

**Part I. of Human Knowledge. 93**

cannot be the cause of any thing, as hath been already shewn *vid. Sect. XXV.*

§ 51. Seventhly, it will upon this be demanded whether it does not seem absurd, to take away Natural Causes, and ascribe every thing to the immediate Operation of Spirits? We must no longer say upon these Principles that Fire Heats, or Water Cools, but that a Spirit Heats, &c. wou'd not a Man be deservedly laugh'd at, who shou'd talk after this manner? I answer he wou'd so, in such Things we ought to *Think with the Learned, and Speak with the Vulgar.* They who to demonstration are convinced of the truth of the Copernican System, do nevertheless say the Sun Rises, the Sun Sets or comes to the Meridian: And if they affected a contrary Stile, in common talk, it wou'd without doubt appear very ridiculous. A little Reflexion on what is here said will make it manifest, that the common use of Language wou'd receive no manner of Alteration or Disturbance from the admission of our Tenents,

§ 52. In the ordinary affairs of Life, any Phrases may be retain'd, so long as they Excite in us proper Sentiments, or Dispositions to act in such a manner as is necessary for our well-being, how false soever they may be, if taken in a strict and Speculative Sense. Nay this is unavoidable since, Propriety being regulated by Custom, Language is suited to the received Opinions which are not always the truest. Hence it is impossible even in the most rigid, Philosophic Reasonings, so far to alter the Bent and Genius of the Tongue we speak, as never to give a handle for Cavillers to pretend Difficulties and Inconsistencies. But a fair and ingenuous Reader will collect the Sense, from the Scope and Tenor and Connexion of a Discourse, making allowances for those unaccurate Modes of Speech, which use has made inevitable.

§ 53. As to the Opinion that there are no Corporeal Causes, this has been heretofore maintain'd by some of the School-



**Part I. of Human Knowledge. 95**

Schoolmen, as it is of late by others among the Modern Philosophers, who tho' they allow Matter to Exist, yet will have GOD alone to be the immediate efficient Cause of all Things. These Men saw, that amongst all the Objects of Sense there was none, which had any Power or Activity included in it, and that by consequence this was likewise true, of whatever Bodies they supposed to Exist without the Mind, like unto the immediate Objects of Sense. But then, that they shou'd suppose an innumerable multitude of Created Beings, which they acknowledge are not capable of producing any one effect in Nature, and which therefore are made to no manner of purpose, since God might have done every thing as well without them, this I say tho' we shou'd allow it possible, must yet be a very unaccountable and extravagant Supposition.

§ 54. In the Eighth Place, the universal concurrent assent of Mankind may be thought by some, an invincible Argument in behalf of Matter, or the Existence

istence of External Things. Must we suppose the whole World to be mistaken, and if so, what cause can be assign'd of so wide-spread and predominant an Error? I answer, First, that upon a narrow inquiry, it will not perhaps be found, so many as is imagin'd do really believe the Existence of Matter, or Things without the Mind. Strictly speaking, to believe that which involves a Contradiction, or has no meaning in it, is impossible, and whether the foregoing Expressions are not of that sort, I refer it to the impartial Examination of the Reader. In one Sense, indeed, Men may be said to believe that Matter Exists, *i. e.* they act as if the immediate Cause of their Sensations, which affects them every moment, and is so nearly present to them, were some senseless unthinking Being. But that they shou'd clearly apprehend any meaning marked by those Words, and form thereof a Settled Speculative Opinion, is what I am not able to conceive. This is not the only Instance wherein Men impose upon themselves, by Imagining they believe

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 97

believe those Propositions they have often heard, tho' at Bottom they have no meaning in them.

§ 55. But Secondly, Tho' we shou'd grant a Notion to be never so universally and stedfastly adhered to, yet this is but a weak Argument of its truth, to whoever considers what a vast number of Prejudices and false Opinions are every where embraced, with the utmost tenaciousness by the unreflecting (which are the far-greater) part of Mankind. There was a time when the *Antipodes* and Motion of the Earth, were look'd upon as monstrous Absurdities, even by Men of Learning: And if it be consider'd what a small proportion they bear to the rest of Mankind, we shall find that at this Day, those Notions have gain'd but a very inconsiderable footing in the World.

§ 56. But it is demanded, that we assign a cause of this Prejudice, and account for its obtaining in the World. To this I answer, That Men knowing  
O they



they perceiv'd several Ideas, whereof they themselves were not the Authors, as not being excited from within, nor depending on the operation of their Wills, this made 'em maintain, those Ideas or Objects of Perception had an Existence independent of, and without the Mind, without ever dreaming that a Contradiction was involved in those Words. But Philosophers having plainly seen, that the immediate Objects of Perception do not Exist without the Mind, they in some degree corrected the mistake of the Vulgar, but at the same time run into another which seems no less Absurd, *viz.* that there are certain Objects really Existing without the Mind, or having a subsistence distinct from being perceived, of which our Ideas are only Images or Resemblance, imprinted by those Objects on the Mind. And this Notion of the Philosophers owes its Origine to the same cause with the former, namely their being conscious that they were not the Authors of their own Sensations, which they evidently knew were imprinted from

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 99

from without, and which therefore must have some cause, distinct from the Minds on which they are imprinted.

§ 57. But why they shou'd suppose the Ideas of Sense to be excited in us, by things in their likeness, and not rather have recourse to *Spirit* which alone can act, may be accounted for, First, because they were not aware of the Repugnancy there is, as well in supposing things like unto our Ideas Existing without, as in attributing to them Power or Activity. Secondly, because the supreme Spirit which Excites those Ideas in our Minds, is not mark'd out and limited to our view by any particular, finite Collection of sensible Ideas, as Human Agents are by their Size, Complexion, Limbs, Motions, &c. And Thirdly, because his Operations are regular and uniform. Whenever the Course of Nature is interrupted by a Miracle, Men are ready to own the presence of a Superiour Agent. But when we see things go on in the ordinary Course, they do not Excite in us any Reflexion,

their Order and Concatenation, tho' it be an Argument of the greatest Wisdom, Power, and Goodness in their Creator, is yet so constant and familiar to us, that we do not think 'em the immediate effects of a *Free Spirit*: especially since Inconstancy and Mutability in acting, tho' it be an Imperfection, is look'd on as a mark of *Freedom*.

§ 58 Tenthly, It will be objected, that the Notions we advance are inconsistent with several sound Truths in Philosophy and Mathematics. For Example, The Motion of the Earth is now universally admitted by Astronomers, as a Truth grounded on the clearest and most convincing Reasons. But on the foregoing Principles there can be no such thing. For Motion being only an Idea, it follows that if it be not perceived it Exists not, but the Motion of the Earth is not perceiv'd by Sense. I Answer, That Tenent, if rightly understood, will be found to agree with the Principles we have premised: For the Question, whether the Earth moves or  
no



**Part I. of Human Knowledge. 101**

no, amounts in reality to no more than this, *viz.* whether we have reason to conclude, from what hath been observ'd by Astronomers, that if we were placed in such and such Circumstances, and such or such a Position and Distance, both from the Earth and Sun, we shou'd perceive the former to move among the Choir of the Planets, and appearing in all respects like one of them : And this, by the Establish'd Rules of Nature, which we have no reason to mistrust, is reasonably collected from the Phænomena.

§ 59. We may from the Experience we have had, of the Train and Succession of Ideas in our Minds, often make, I will not say uncertain Conjectures, but, sure and well grounded Predictions, concerning the Ideas we shall be affected with pursuant to a great Train of Actions, and be enabled to pass a right Judgement of what wou'd have appear'd to us, in case we were placed in Circumstances, very different from those we are in at present. Herein consists

sists the Knowledge of Nature, which may preserve its use and certainty very consistently with what hath been said. It will be easy, to apply this to whatever Objections of the like sort may be drawn, from the Magnitude of the Stars, or any other Discoveries in Astronomy or Nature.

§ 60. In the eleventh Place, it will be demanded to what purpose serves that curious Organization of Plants, and the admirable Mechanism in the Parts of Animals ; might not Vegetables grow, and shoot forth Leaves and Blossoms, and Animals perform all their Motions, as well without, as with all that variety of Internal Parts so elegantly contriv'd and put together, which being Ideas, have nothing Powerful or Operative in them, nor have any necessary connexion with the effects ascribed to them ? If it be a Spirit that immediately produces every effect by a *fiat*, or act of his will, we must think all that's fine and artificial in the Works, whether of Man or Nature, to be made

I. ch ry id. te- be the Af- will ves nts, the eta- and all with ele- her, ow- have fects that by a hink orks, be made

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 103

made in vain. By this Doctrine, tho' an Artift has made the Spring and Wheels, and every Movement of a Watch, and adjusted them in fuch a manner, as he knew wou'd produce the Motions he design'd; yet he must think all this done to no purpose, and that it is an Intelligence which directs the Index, and points to the Hour of the Day. If so, why may not the Intelligence do it, without his being at the pains of making the Movements, and putting them together? Why does not an empty Case serve as well as another; and how comes it to pass, that whenever there is any Fault in the going of a Watch, there is some corresponding Disorder to be found in the Movements, which being mended by a skilful Hand, all is right again? The like may be said of all the Clock-work of Nature, great part whereof is so wonderfully Fine and Subtile, as scarce to be discern'd by the best Microscope. In short it will be ask'd, how upon our Principles any tolerable Account can be given, or any final Cause assign'd of



104 *Of the Principles* Part I.

of an innumerable multitude of Bodies and Machines, fram'd with the most exquisite Art, which in the common Philosophy have very apposite Uses assigned them, and serve to explain abundance of Phænomena.

§ 61. To all which, I answer, First, That tho' there were some Difficulties relating to the administration of Providence, and the Uses by it assign'd to the several parts of Nature, which I cou'd not solve by the foregoing Principles, yet this Objection cou'd be of small weight against the truth and certainty of those Things, which may be prov'd *a Priori*, with the utmost Evidence and Rigor of Demonstration. Secondly, But neither are the receiv'd Principles free from the like Difficulties; for it may still be demanded, to what end God shou'd take those roundabout Methods of effecting things by Instruments and Machines, which no one can deny might have been effected by the meer command of his Will, without all that *apparatus*: Nay, if we  
nar-

Part I. of Human Knowledge. 105

narrowly consider it, we shall find the Objection may be retorted with greater force, on those who hold the Existence of those Machines without the Mind; for it has been made evident, that Solidity, Bulk, Figure, Motion, &c. have no *Activity* or *Efficacy* in them, so as to be capable of producing any one effect in Nature, *vid. Sect. XXV.* whoever therefore supposes them to Exist (allowing the Supposition possible) when they are not perceived, does it manifestly to no purpose, since the only use that is assign'd to them, as they Exist unperceiv'd, is that they produce those perceivable Effects which, in truth, cannot be ascrib'd to any thing but Spirit.

§ 62 But to come nigher the Difficulty, it must be observ'd, that tho' the Fabrication of all those Parts and Organs be not absolutely necessary to the producing any Effect, yet it is necessary to the producing of things in a constant, regular way, according to the Laws of Nature. There are certain general

P

neral

neral Laws, that run thro' the whole Chain of Natural Effects, these are learn'd by the Observation and Study of Nature, and are by Men applied as well to the framing artificial Things, for the Use and Ornament of Life, as to the explaining the various *Phænomena*, which Explication consists only in shewing the Conformity, any particular Phænomenon hath to the general Laws of Nature, or, which is the same thing, in discovering the *Uniformity*, there is in the Production of natural Effects, as will be evident to whoever shall attend to the several Instances, wherein Philosophers pretend to account for Appearances. That there is a great and conspicuous Use in these regular, constant Methods of working, observ'd by the Supreme Agent, has been shewn in *Sect. XXXI.* and it is no less visible, that a particular Size, Figure, Motion and Disposition of Parts are necessary, tho' not absolutely to the producing any Effect, yet to the producing it according to the Standing, Mechanical Laws of Nature. Thus, for Instance, It cannot be denied



*Part I. of Human Knowledge.* 107

denied that God, or the Intelligence that sustains and rules the ordinary course of Things, might if He were minded to produce a Miracle, cause all the Motions on the Dial-plate of a Watch, tho' no Body had ever made the Movements, and put them in it: But yet if he will act agreeably to the Rules of Mechanism, by him for wise Ends establish'd and maintain'd in the Creation, it is necessary that those Actions of the Watch-maker, whereby he makes the Movements and rightly adjusts them, precede the production of the aforesaid Motions, as also that any disorder in them be attended with the Perception of some corresponding Disorder, in the Movements, which being once Corrected all is right again.

§ 63. It may, indeed, on some Occasions be necessary, that the Author of Nature display his over-ruling Power, in producing some Appearance out of the ordinary Series of Things. Such Exceptions from the general Rules of Nature, are proper to surprize and awe

108 *Of the Principles* Part I.

Men into an acknowledgment of the of the Divine Being : But then they are to be used but seldom, otherwise there is a plain reason, why they shou'd fail of that Effect. Besides, God seems to choose the convincing our Reason of his Attributes by the works of Nature, which discover so much Harmony and Contrivance in their Make, and are such plain Indications of Wisdom and Beneficence in their Author, rather than to astonish us into a belief of his Being by anomalous and surprising Events.

§ 64. To set this Matter in a yet clearer Light, I shall observe that what has been objected in *Seet. LX.* amounts in reality to no more than this. Ideas are not any how and at random produced, there being a certain Order and Connexion between them, like to that of Cause and Effect : There are also several Combinations of them, made in a very Regular and Artificial Manner, which seem like so many Instruments in the hand of Nature, that being hid as it were behind the Scenes, have a secret Operation

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 109

Operation in producing those Appearances, which are seen on the Theatre of the World, being themselves discernible only to the curious Eye of the Philosopher. But since one Idea cannot be the Cause of another, to what purpose is that Connexion? And since those Instruments, being barely *inefficacious Perceptions* in the Mind, are not subservient to the Production of Natural Effects; it is demanded why they are made, or, in other Words, what reason can be assign'd, why God shou'd make us upon a close inspection into His Works, behold so great variety of Ideas, so artfully laid together, and so much according to Rule: It not being imaginable, that he'd be at the Expence (if one may so speak) of all that Art and Regularity to no purpose.

§ 65. To all which my Answer is, First, That the Connexion of Ideas does not imply the Relation of *Cause* and *Effect*, but only of a Mark or *Sign* with the Thing *signified*. The Fire which I see, is not the Cause of the Pain I suffer



110 *Of the Principles* Part I.

suffer upon my approaching it, but the Mark that forewarns me of it. In like manner the Noise that I hear is not the Effect of this or that Motion, or collision of the ambient Bodies, but the Sign thereof. Secondly, The reason why Ideas are form'd into Machines, *i. e.* artificial and regular Combinations, is the same with that for combining Letters into Words. That a few Original Ideas may be made to signify, a great number of Effects and Actions, 'tis necessary they be variously combin'd together: And to the end their Use be permanent and universal, these Combinations must be made by *Rule*, and with *wise Contrivance*. By this means abundance of Information is convey'd unto us, concerning what we are to expect from such and such Actions, and what Methods are proper to be taken, for the Exciting such and such Ideas: Which in effect, is all that I conceive to be distinctly meant, when it is said that by discerning the Figure, Texture, and Mechanism of the inward Parts of Bodies, whether Natural or Artificial,

we

## Part I. of Human Knowledge. III

we may attain to know the several Uses and Properties depending thereon, or the Nature of the Thing.

§ 66. Hence it is evident, that those Things, which under the Notion of a Cause co-operating or concurring to the production of Effects, are altogether inexplicable, and run us into great Absurdities, may be very naturally explain'd, and have a proper and obvious Use assign'd 'em, when they are consider'd only as Marks, or Signs for our Information. And it is the searching after, and endeavouring to understand this Language (if I may so call it) of the Author of Nature, that ought to be the Employment of the Natural Philosopher; and not the pretending to explain Things by Corporeal Causes, which Doctrine seems to have too much estranged the Minds of Men, from that active Principle, that supreme and wise Spirit, *in whom we Live, Move, and have our Being.*

§ 67 In the Twelfth place, it may perhaps be objected, that tho' it be clear from

112 *Of the Principles* Part I.

from what has been said, that there can be no such thing as an Inert, Senseless, Extended, Solid, Figured, Moveable Substance Existing without the Mind, such as Philosophers describe Matter: Yet if any Man shall leave out of his Idea of *Matter*, the positive Ideas of Extension, Figure, Solidity and Motion, and say that he means only by that word, an Inert, Senseless Substance that Exists without the Mind or unperceiv'd, which is the Occasion of our Ideas, or at the presence whereof God is pleased to excite Ideas in us: It doth not appear, but that Matter taken in this Sense may possibly Exist. In Answer to which I say, First, That it seems no less Absurd to suppose a Substance without Accidents, than it is to suppose Accidents without a Substance. But Secondly, Tho' we shou'd grant this unknown Substance may possibly Exist, yet where can it be supposed to be? That it Exists not in the Mind is agreed, and that it Exists not in Place is no less certain; since all Place or Extension Exists only in the Mind as hath been



Part I. of Human Knowledge. 113

been already prov'd. It remains therefore that it Exists no where at all.

§ 68. Let us examine a little, the description that is here given us of *Matter*. It neither acts, nor perceives, nor is perceiv'd : For this is all that's meant, by saying it is an Inert, Senseless, Unknown Substance, which is a Definition intirely made up of Negatives, excepting only the relative Notion of its standing under or Supporting : But then it must be observ'd that it *Supports* nothing at all ; and how nearly this comes to the description of a *non-entity*, I desire may be consider'd. But say you it is the *unknown occasion*, at the presence of which, Ideas are Excited in us by the will of God. Now I wou'd fain know, how any thing can be present to us, which is neither perceivable by Sense nor Reflexion, nor capable of producing any Idea in our Minds, nor is at all extended, nor hath any Form, nor Exists in any place. The words *to be present*, when thus applied, must needs be taken in some abstract and strange

Q

Mean-

Meaning, and which I am not able to comprehend.

§ 69. Again, let us examine what is meant by *Occasion*: So far as I can gather from the common Use of Language, that Word signifies, either the Agent which produces any Effect, or else something that is observ'd to accompany, or go before it, in the ordinary course of things. But when it is applied to Matter as above described, it can be taken in neither of those Senses. For Matter is said to be Passive and Inert, and so cannot be an Agent or Efficient Cause. It is also unperceivable as being devoid of all Sensible Qualities, and so cannot be the Occasion of our Perceptions in the latter Sense: As when the burning my Finger, is said to be the Occasion of the Pain that attends it. What therefore can be meant by calling Matter an *Occasion*? This Term is either used in no Sense at all, or else in some very distant from its receiv'd Signification

§ 70. You

*Part I. of Human Knowledge.* 115

§ 70. You will perhaps say that Matter, tho' it be not perceiv'd by us, is nevertheless perceived by GOD, to whom it is the Occasion of Exciting Ideas in our Minds. For, say you, since we observe our Sensations to be imprinted in an orderly and constant manner, it is but reasonable to suppose, there are certain Constant, and Regular Occasions of their being produced. That is to say, that there are certain permanent, and distinct parcels of Matter, corresponding to our Ideas, which tho' they do not excite them in our Minds, or any wise immediately affect us, as being altogether Passive and Unperceivable to Us, they are nevertheless to GOD, by whom they are Perceiv'd, as it were so many Occasions, to remind him when and what Ideas, to imprint on our Minds: that so things may go on in a constant, uniform manner.

§ 71. In answer to this I observe, that, as the Notion of Matter is here Stated, the Question is no longer con-

Q 2

cerning



116 *Of the Principles* Part I.

cerning the Existence of a Thing distinct from *Spirit* and *Idea*, from Perceiving and being Perceiv'd : But whether there are not certain Ideas, of I know not what Sort, in the Mind of GOD, which are so many Marks or Notes, that direct him how to produce Sensations in our Minds, in a constant and regular Method : Much after the same manner, as a Musician is directed by the Notes of Music, to produce that harmonious train and composition of Sound, which is called a *Tune* ; tho' they who Hear the Music do not Perceive the Notes, and may be intirely ignorant of them. But this Notion of Matter (which after all is the only intelligible one that I can pick, from what is said of unknown Occasions) seems too extravagant to deserve a Confutation. Besides, it is in effect no Objection against what we have advanced, *viz.* that there is no senseless, unperceiv'd *Substance*.

§ 72. If we follow the Light of Reason, we shall, from the constant uniform

Part I. of Human Knowledge. 117

form Method of our Sensations, collect the Goodness and Wisdom of the *Spirit* who excites them in our Minds. But this is all that I can see reasonably concluded from thence. To me, I say, 'tis evident that the Being of a *Spirit infinitely Wise, Good, and Powerful* is abundantly sufficient, to explain all the Appearances of Nature. But as for *Inert, Senseless Matter*, nothing that I perceive has any the least Connexion with it, or leads to the Thoughts of it. And I wou'd fain see any one Explain, any the meanest *Phænomenon* in Nature by it, or shew any manner of Reason, tho' in the lowest Rank of Probability, that he can have for its Existence; or even make any tolerable Sense or Meaning of that Supposition. For as to its being an Occasion, we have, I think, evidently shewn that with regard to us it is no Occasion: It remains therefore that it must be, if at all, the Occasion to God of exciting Ideas in us; and what this amounts to we have just now seen.

§ 73. It is worth while to reflect a little, on the Motives which induced Men to suppose the Existence of Material Substance; that so having observ'd the gradual Ceasing, and Expiration of those Motives or Reasons, we may proportionably withdraw the Assent that was grounded on them. First, therefore, it was thought that Colour, Figure, Motion, and the rest of the Sensible Qualities or Accidents, did really Exist without the Mind; and for this reason, it seem'd needful to suppose some unthinking *Substratum*, or *Substance* wherein they did Exist, since they cou'd not be conceived to Exist by themselves. Afterwards, in process of time, Men being convinced that Colours, Sounds, and the rest of the Sensible, Secondary Qualities had no Existence without the Mind, they stripped this *Substratum* or material Substance of those Qualities, leaving only the Primary Ones, Figure, Motion, &c. which they still conceived to Exist without the Mind, and consequently, to stand in need of a material Support.



Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 119

port. But it having been shewn, that none, even of these, can possibly Exist otherwise than in a Spirit or Mind which perceives them, it follows, that we have no longer any reason, to suppose the being of *Matter*. Nay, that it is utterly impossible there shou'd be any such thing, so long as that Word is taken to denote, an *unthinking Substratum* of Qualities or Accidents, wherein they Exist without the Mind.

§ 74. But tho' it be allow'd by the *Materialists*, themselves, that Matter was thought of only for the sake of supporting Accidents; and the reason intirely ceasing, one might expect the Mind shou'd naturally, and without any reluctance at all, quit the belief of what was solely grounded thereon. Yet the Prejudice is riveted so deeply in our Thoughts, that we can scarce tell how to part with it, and are therefore inclined, since the *Thing* it self is indefensible, at least to retain the *Name*; which we apply to, I know not what, abstracted and indefinite Notions of *Being*, *Occasion*,

*caſion*, &c. tho' without any ſhew of Reason, at leaſt ſo far as I can ſee. For what is there, I beſeech you, on our part, or what do we perceive amongſt all the Ideas, Sensations, Notions, which are imprinted on our Minds, either by Sense or Reflexion, from whence may be infer'd the Exiſtence of an inert, thoughtleſs, unperceiv'd Occaſion? and on the other hand, on the part of an *All-ſufficient Spirit*, what can there be that ſhou'd make us believe, or even ſuſpect, he is *directed* by an inert Occaſion to excite Ideas in our Minds?

§ 75. It is a very extraordinary Inſtance of the force of Prejudice, and much to be lamented, that the Mind of Man retains ſo great a Fondneſs, againſt all the evidence of Reason, for a ſtupid, thoughtleſs *Somewhat*, by the interpoſition whereof it wou'd, as it were, ſcreen it ſelf, from the Providence of God, and remove it farther off from the Affairs of the World. But tho' we do the utmoſt we can, to ſecure the belief of *Matter*, tho' when Reason forſakes us,

we

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 121

we endeavour to support our Opinion on the bare possibility of the Thing, and tho' we Indulge our selves in the full Scope, of an Imagination not regulated by Reason, to make out that poor *Possibility*, yet the Up-shot of all is, that there certain *unknown Ideas* in the Mind of God; for this, if any thing, is all that I conceive to be meant by *Occasion* with regard to God. And this, at the Bottom, is no longer contending for the *Thing*, but for the *Name*.

§ 76. Whether therefore there are such Ideas in the Mind of God, and whether they may be called by the name *Matter* I shan't dispute. But if you stick to the Notion of an unthinking Substance, or Support of Extension, Motion, &c. then to me it is most evidently impossible, there shou'd be any such thing. Since it is a plain Repugnancy, that those Qualities shou'd Exist in or be supported by an unperceiving Substance.

§ 77. But say you, tho' it be granted that there is no thoughtless support

R

of



of Extension, and the other Qualities or Accidents which we Perceive ; yet there may, perhaps, be some Inert, Unperceiving Substance, or *Substratum* of some other Qualities, as incomprehensible to us as Colours are to a Man born Blind, because we have not a Sense adapted to them. But if we had a new Sense, we shou'd possibly no more doubt of their Existence, than a Blind-man made to See does of the Existence of Light and Colours. I answer, First, if what you mean by the word *Matter* be only the unknown Support of unknown Qualities, it's no matter whether there is such a thing or no ; since it no way concerns us : And for my part, I do not see the Advantage there is in disputing about we know not *what*, and we know not *why*.

§ 78. But, Secondly, if we had a new Sense it cou'd only furnish us with new Ideas or Sensations: And then we shou'd have the same reason, against their Existing in an unperceiving Substance, that has been already offer'd with relation

I. Part I. of Human Knowledge. 123

to Figure, Motion, Colour, &c. Qualities, as hath been shewn, are nothing else but *Sensations* or *Ideas*, which Exist only in a *Mind* perceiving them; and this is true not only of the Ideas we are acquainted with at present, but likewise of all possible Ideas whatsoever.

§ 79. But you will insist, what if I have no reason to believe the Existence of Matter, what if I cannot assign any use to it, or explain any thing by it, or even conceive what is meant by that Word? Yet still it is no Contradiction to say that Matter Exists, and that this Matter is *in general* a *Substance*, or *Occasion of Ideas*; tho', indeed, to go about to unfold the meaning, or adhere to any particular Explication of those Words, may be attended with great Difficulties. I answer, when Words are used without a Meaning, you may put them together as you please, without danger of running into a Contradiction. You may say, for Example, that *twice Two* is equal to *Seven*, so long as you declare you do not take the Words of that Proposition

R 2

124 *Of the Principles* Part I.

position in their usual Acception, but for Marks of you know not what. And by the same reason you may say, there is an inert, thoughtless Substance without Accidents, which is the occasion of our Ideas. And we shall understand just as much by one Proposition, as the other.

§ 80. In the last place, you will say, What if we give up the Cause of material Substance, and stand to it, that Matter is an unknown *Somewhat*, neither Substance nor Accident, Spirit nor Idea, Inert, Thoughtless, Indivisible, Immoveable, Unextended, Existing in no Place? For, say you, Whatever may be urged against *Substance* or *Occasion*, or any other positive or relative Notion of Matter hath no place at all, so long as this *negative* Definition of Matter is adhered to. I answer you may, if so it shall seem good, use the word *Matter* in the same Sense, that other Men use *Nothing*, and so make those Terms convertible in your Stile. For after all, this is what appears to me to be the Result of



Part I. of Human Knowledge. 125

of that Definition, the Parts whereof when I consider with Attention, either collectively, or separate from each other, I do not find that there's any kind of Effect or Impression made on my Mind, different from what is excited by term *Nothing*.

§ 81. Upon this, you'll Reply that in the foresaid Definition, is included, what doth sufficiently distinguish it from nothing, the positive, abstract Idea of *Quiddity, Entity, or Existence*. I own indeed, that those who pretend to the Faculty of framing Abstract, General Ideas, do talk as if they had such an Idea, which is, say they, the most abstract and general Notion of all, that is, to me, the most Incomprehensible of all Others. That there are a great variety of Spirits of different Orders and Capacities, whose Faculties, both in Number and Extent, are far exceeding those the Author of my Being has bestowed on me, I see no reason to deny. And for me, to pretend to determine, by my own few, stinted, narrow Inlets of Perception, what Ideas

Ideas the inexhaustible Power of the SUPREME SPIRIT may Imprint upon 'em, were certainly the utmost Folly and Presumption. Since there may be, for ought that I know, innumerable sorts of Ideas or Sensations, as different from one another, and from all that I have perceiv'd, as Colours are from Sounds. But how ready soever I may be, to acknowledge the Scantiness of my Comprehension, with regard to the endless variety of Spirits and Ideas, that may possibly Exist, yet for any one to pretend to a Notion of Entity or Existence, *abstracted* from *Spirit* and *Idea*, from Perceiving and being Perceiv'd, is, I suspect, a downright Repugnancy and Trifling with Words. It remains that we consider the Objections, which may possibly be made on the part of Religion.

§ 82. Some there are who think, that tho' the Arguments for the real Existence of Bodies, which are drawn from Reason, be allow'd not to amount to Demonstration, yet the Holy Scriptures are so clear in the Point, as will sufficiently

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 127

ently convince every good Christian, that Bodies do really Exist, and are something more than meer Ideas; there being in Holy Writ innumerable Facts related, which evidently suppose the reality of Timber, and Stone, Mountains, and Rivers, and Cities, and Human Bodies, &c. To which I Answer, that no sort of Writings, whatever Sacred or Profane, which use those and the like Words in the Vulgar Acceptation, or so as to have a meaning in 'em, are in danger of having their Truth call'd in question by our Doctrine. That all those Things do really Exist, that there are Bodies, even Corporeal Substances, when taken in the Vulgar Sense, has been shewn to be agreeable to our Principles: And the difference betwixt *Things* and *Ideas*, *Realities* and *Chimeras*, has been distinctly Explain'd, *vid. Sect. XXIX, XXX, XXXII, XXXVI, &c.* And I do not think, that either what Philosophers call *Matter*, or the Existence of Objects without the Mind is any where mention'd in Scripture.

§ 83. Again,



§ 83. Again, whether there be, or be not External Things, it is agreed on all hands, that the proper Use of Words, is the marking our Conceptions, or Things only as they are Known and Perceiv'd by us; whence it plainly follows, that in the Tenents we have laid down, there is nothing inconsistent with the right Use and Significancy of *Language* and that Discourse of what kind soever, so far as it is Intelligible, remains Undisturb'd. But all this seems so very manifest, from what hath been largely set forth in the Premises, that it is needless to insist any farther on it.

§ 84. But it will be urg'd, that Miracles do, at least, lose much of their Stress and Import, by our Principles. What must we think of *Moses's Rod*, was it not *really* turn'd into a Serpent, or was there only a Change of *Ideas* in the Minds of the Spectators? And can it be supposed, that our Saviour did no more at the Marriage-Feast in *Cana*, than impose on the Sight, and Smell, and Taste  
of

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 129

of the Guests, so as to create in them the Appearance or Idea only of Wine? The same may be said of all other Miracles: Which, in consequence of the foregoing Principles, must be look'd upon only as so many Cheats, or Illusions of Fancy. To this I Reply, that the Rod was changed into a real Serpent, and the Water into real Wine. That this does not, in the least, contradict what I have elsewhere said, will be evident from *Seet. XXXIV*, and *XXXV*. But this Business of *Real* and *Imaginary* has been already so plainly and fully Explain'd, and so often Refer'd to, and the Difficulties about it are so easily Answer'd from what has gone before, that it were an Affront to the Reader's Understanding, to resume the Explication of it in this place. I shall only observe, that if at Table all who were present shou'd See, and Smell, and Taste, and Drink Wine, and find the effects of it, with me there cou'd be no doubt of it's Reality. So that, at Bottom, the Scruple concerning real Miracles has no place at all on ours, but only on the

S

receiv'd

receiv'd Principles, and consequently makes rather *for*, than *against* what has been said.

§ 85. Having done with the Objections, which I endeavour'd to propose in the clearest Light, and gave them all the Force and Weight I cou'd, we proceed in the next place to take a view of our Tenets in their Consequences. Some of these appear at first Sight, as that several Difficult and obscure Questions, on which abundance of Speculation has been thrown away, are intirely banish'd from Philosophy. Whether Corporeal Substance can think : Whether Matter be infinitely Divisible : And how it Operates on Spirit ; these and the like Inquiries have given infinite Amusement to Philosophers, in all Ages. But depending on the Existence of *Matter*, they have no longer any place on our Principles. Many other Advantages there are, as well with regard to *Religion* as the *Sciences*, which it is easy for any one to deduce, from what has been premised. But this will appear more plainly in the Sequel.

§ 86. From



Part I. of Human Knowledge. 131

§ 86. From the Principles we have laid down, it follows, Human Knowledge many naturally be reduced to two Heads, that of *Ideas*, and that of *Spirits*. Of each of these I shall treat in Order. And first as to Ideas or Unthinking Things, our Knowledge of these has been very much obscur'd, and confounded, and we have been led into very dangerous Errors, by supposing a two-fold Existence of the Objects of Sense, the one *Intelligible*, or in the Mind, the other *Real* and without the Mind: Whereby Unthinking Things are thought, to have a natural Subsistence of their own, distinct from being perceiv'd by Spirits. This which, if I mistake not, hath been shewn to be a most groundless and absurd Notion, is the very Root of *Scepticism*; for so long as Men thought that Real Things subsisted without the Mind, and that their Knowledge was only so far forth *Real* as it was conformable to *real Things*, it follows, they cou'd not be certain, that they had any real Knowledge at all. For

132 *Of the Principles* Part I.

how can it be known, that the Things which are Perceiv'd, are conformable to those which are not Perceiv'd, or Exist without the Mind?

§ 87. Colour, Figure, Motion, Extension and the like, consider'd only as so many *Sensations* in the Mind, are perfectly known, there being nothing in them which is not Perceiv'd. But if they are look'd on as Notes or Images, referred to *Things* or *Archetypes* Existing without the Mind, then are we involved all in *Scepticism*. We see only the Appearances, and not the real Qualities of Things. What may be the Extension, Figure, or Motion of any Thing really and absolutely, or in it self, its impossible for us to know, but only the proportion or relation they bear to our Senses. Things remaining the same, our Ideas vary, and which of them, or even whether any of them at all, represent the true Quality really Existing in the Thing, it is out of our Reach to determine. So that, for ought we know, all we See, Hear, and Feel, may be only Phant

## Part I. of Human Knowledge. 133

Phantome and vain Chimera, and not at all agree with the Real Things, Existing in *Rerum Natura*. All this Sceptical Cant follows, from our supposing a difference between *Things* and *Ideas*, and that the former have a Subsistence without the Mind, or Unperceiv'd. It were easy to dilate on this Subject, and shew how the Arguments urged by *Sceptics* in all Ages, depend on the supposition of External Objects. But this is too obvious to need being insisted on.

§ 88. So long as we attribute a real Existence to Unthinking Things, distinct from their being perceiv'd, it is not only impossible, for us to know with evidence the Nature of any real, unthinking Being, but even that it Exists. Hence it is, that we see Philosophers distrust their Senses, and doubt of the Existence of Heaven and Earth, of every thing they See or Feel, even of their own Bodies. And after all their labouring and struggle of Thought, they are forced to own, we cannot attain to any self-evident, or demonstrative Knowledge, of the



134 *Of the Principles* Part I.

the Existence of sensible Things. But all this Doubtfulness, which so Bewilders and Confounds the Mind, and makes *Philosophy* ridiculous in the Eyes of the World, vanishes if we annex a meaning to our Words, and not amuse our selves with the terms *Absolute*, *External*, *Exist*, &c. signifying we know not what. For my part, I can as well doubt of my own Being, as of the Being of those things, which I actually perceive by Sense: It being a manifest Contradiction, that any sensible Object shou'd be immediately perceiv'd by Sight or Touch, and, at the same time, have no Existence in Nature, since the very Existence of an unthinking Being, consists in *being perceiv'd*.

§ 89. Nothing seems of more Importance, towards Erecting a firm System of sound and real Knowledge, which may be Proof against the Assaults of *Scepticism*, than to lay the beginning in a distinct Explication, of what is meant by *Thing*, *Reality*, *Existence*: For in vain shall we Dispute, concerning the real  
Existence

Part I. of Human Knowledge. 135

Existence of Things, or pretend to any Knowledge thereof, so long as we have not fix'd the meaning of those Words. *Thing* or *Being* is the most general Name of all, it comprehends under it two Kinds intirely distinct and heterogeneous, and which have nothing common but the Name, viz. *Spirits* and *Ideas*. The former are *Active, Indivisible, Incorruptible Substances* : The latter are *Inert, Fleeting, Perishable Passions, or Dependent Beings*, which subsist not by themselves, but are supported by, or Exist in Minds or Spiritual Substances.

§ 90. Ideas imprinted on the Senses are real Things, or do really Exist, this we do not deny, but we deny they can subsist without the Minds which perceive them, or that they are Resemblances of any Archetypes Existing without the Mind : Since the very Being of a Sensation or Idea consists in being perceived, and an Idea can be like nothing but an Idea. Again the Things perceived by Sense may be termed *External*, with regard to their Origine, in that they are  
not

not generated from within, by the Mind it self, but imprinted by a Spirit distinct from that which perceives them. Sensible Objects may likewise be said to be without the Mind, in another sense, namely when they Exist in some other Mind. Thus when I shut my Eyes, the Things I saw may still Exist, but it must be in another Mind.

§ 91. It were a mistake to think, that what is here said derogates in the least, from the Reality of Things. It is acknowleg'd on the receiv'd Principles, that Extension, Motion, and in a Word, all sensible Qualities have need of a Support, as not being able to subsist by themselves. But the Objects perceiv'd by Sense, are allow'd to be nothing but Combinations of those Qualities, and consequently cannot subsist by themselves. Thus far it is agreed on all hands. So that in denying the Things perceiv'd by Sense, an Existence independent of a Substance, or Support wherein they may Exist, we detract nothing from the receiv'd Opinion of their Reality;



Part I. of Human Knowledge. 137

*Reality*, and are guilty of no Innovation in that respect. All the Difference is, that according to us the Unthinking Beings perceiv'd by Sense, have no Existence distinct from being Perceiv'd, and cannot therefore Exist in any other Substance, than those Unextended, Indivisible Substances, or *Spirits*, which act, and think, and perceive them: Whereas Philosophers vulgarly hold, the Sensible Qualities do Exist in an Inert, Extended, Unperceiving Substance, which they call *Matter*, to which they attribute a Natural Subsistence, exterior to all Thinking Beings, or distinct from being perceiv'd by any Mind whatsoever, even the Eternal Mind of the CREATOR, wherein they suppose only Ideas of the Corporeal Substances created by him. If indeed they allow them to be at all Created.

§ 92. For as we have shewn the Doctrine of Matter or Corporeal Substance, to have been the main Pillar and Support of *Scepticism*, so likewise upon the same Foundation have been rais'd all the Impious Schemes of *Atheism* and Irreligion.

T

Nay

Nay so great a difficulty has it been thought, to conceive Matter produced out of Nothing, that the most Celebrated among the Ancient Philosophers, even of these who maintain'd the Being of a God, have thought Matter to be Uncreated and Coeternal with him. How great a Friend material Substance has been to *Atheists* in all Ages, were needless to relate. All their monstrous Systems have so visible and necessary a dependence on it, that when this Corner-Stone is once remov'd, the whole Fabrick cannot choose but fall to the Ground. insomuch that it is no longer worth while, to bestow a particular Consideration on the Absurdities of every wretched Sect of *Atheists*.

§ 93. That Impious and Profane Persons, shou'd readily fall in with those Systems, which favour their Inclinations, by deriding Immaterial Substance, and supposing the Soul to be Divisible, and subject to Corruption as the Body, which exclude all Freedom, Intelligence, and Design from the Formation  
of

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 139

of Things, and instead thereof make a Self-existent, Stupid, Unthinking Substance the Root and Origine of all Beings. That they shou'd hearken to those who deny a Providence, or Inspection of a Superior Mind over the Affairs of the World, attributing the whole Series of Events either to Blind Chance, or Fatal Necessity arising from the Impulse of one Body on another. All this is very natural. And on the other hand, when Men of better Principles observe the Enemies of Religion lay so great a Stress on *Unthinking Matter*; and all of them use so much Industry and Artifice to reduce every thing to it; methinks they shou'd Rejoyce to see them Depriv'd of their grand Support, and driven from that only Fortrefs, without which your *Epicureans*, *Hobbists*, and the like, have not even the Shadow of a Pretence, but become the most cheap and easy Triumph in the World.

§ 94. The Existence of Matter, or Bodies unperceiv'd, has not only been the main Support of *Atheists* and *Fata-*



*lists*, but on the Principle does *Idolatry* likewise in all its various Forms, depend. Did Men but consider that the Sun, Moon, and Stars and every other Object of the Senses, are only so many Sensations in their Minds, which have no other Existence but barely being Perceiv'd: Doubtless they wou'd never fall down, and worship their own *Ideas*. But rather address their Homage to that ETERNAL INVISIBLE MIND which produces and sustains all Things.

§ 95. The same absurd Principle, by mingling it self with the Articles of our Faith, has occasion'd no small Difficulties to Christians. For Example, about the *Resurrection*, how many Scruples and Objections have been rais'd by *Socinians* and Others? But do not the most plausible of them depend on the supposition, that a Body is denominat'd the same, with regard not to the Form or that which is perceiv'd by Sense, but the Material Substance, which remains the same under several Forms? Take away this *Material Substance*, about the Identity

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 141

tity whereof all the Dispute is, and mean by *Body* what every plain, ordinary Person means by that Word, *viz.* that which is immediately Seen and Felt, which is only a Combination of sensible Qualities, or Ideas: And then their most unanswerable Objections come to nothing.

§ 96. Matter being once expell'd out of Nature, drags with it so many Sceptical and Impious Notions, such an incredible number of Disputes and puzzling Questions, which have been Thorns in the sides of Divines, as well as Philosophers, and made so much fruitless Work for Mankind; that if the Arguments we have produced against it, are not found equal to Demonstration (as to me they evidently seem) yet I am sure all Friends to Knowledge, Peace, and Religion have reason to wish they were.

§ 97. Beside the external Existence of the Objects of Perception, another great Source of Errors and Difficulties, with

142 *Of the Principles* Part I.

with regard to Ideal Knowledge, is the Doctrine of *Abstract Ideas*, such as it hath been set forth in the Introduction. The plainest things in the World, those we are most intimately acquainted with, and perfectly know, when they are consider'd in an Abstract way, appear strangely difficult and incomprehensible. Time, Place, and Motion, taken in particular, or concrete, are what every Body knows; but having passed thro' the Hands of a Metaphysician, they become too Abstract and Fine, to be apprehended by Men of ordinary Sense. Bid your Servant meet you at such a *Time*, in such a *Place*, and he shall never stay to deliberate on the meaning of those Words: In conceiving that particular Time and Place, or the Motion by which he is to get thither, he finds not the least Difficulty. But if *Time* be taken, exclusive of all those particular Actions and Ideas that diversifie the Day, meerly for the Continuation of Existence, or Duration in Abstract, then it will perhaps Gravel even a Philosopher to comprehend it.

§ 98. For



Part I. of Human Knowledge. 143

§. 98. For my own part, whenever I attempt to frame a simple Idea of *Time*, abstracted from the succession of Ideas in my Mind, which flows uniformly, and is participated by all Beings, I am lost and embrangled in inextricable Difficulties. I have no Notion of it at all, only I hear others say, it is infinitely Divisible, and speak of it in such a manner, as leads me to harbour odd Thoughts of my Existence: Since that Doctrine lays one under an absolute necessity, of thinking, either that he passes away innumerable Ages without a Thought, or else that he is annihilated every moment of his Life: Both which seem equally absurd. Time therefore being nothing, abstracted from the Succession of Ideas in our Minds, it follows, that the Duration of any Finite Spirit must be estimated, by the Number of Ideas or Actions succeeding each other, in that same Spirit or Mind. Hence it is a plain Consequence that, the Soul always thinks: And in truth whoever shall go about to divide in his Thoughts, or abstract the  
*Existence*

144 *Of the Principles* Part I.

*Existence* of a Spirit from its *Cogitation* will, I believe, find it no easy Task.

§ 99. So likewise, when we attempt to abstract Extension and Motion, from all other Qualities, and consider them by themselves,, we presently lose sight of 'em, and run into great Extravagancies. Hence spring those odd Paradoxes, that the *Fire is not Hot*, nor the *Wall White*, &c. or that Heat and Colour are in the Objects, nothing but Figure and Motion. All which depend on a two-fold Abstraction: First it is supposed that Extension, for example, may be abstracted from all other sensible Qualities; and Secondly, that the Entity of Extension, may be abstracted from its being Perceiv'd. But whoever shall reflect, and take care to understand what he says, will, if I mistake not, acknowledge that all sensible Qualities are alike *Sensations*, and alike *Real*, that where the Extension is, there is the Colour too, *i. e.* in his Mind, and that their Archetypes, can exist only in some other *Mind*. And that the Objects of Sense are nothing but

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 145

but those Sensations combin'd, blended or (if one may so speak) concreted together : None of all which can be suppos'd to Exist unperceiv'd. And that, consequently, the Wall is as truly White, as it is Extended, and in the same Sense.

§ 100. What it is for a Man to be Happy, or an Object Good, every one may think he knows. But to frame an Abstract Idea of *Happiness*, prescinded from all particular Pleasure, or of *Goodness*, from every thing that is Good, this is what few can pretend to. So likewise, a Man may be Just and Virtuous, without having precise Ideas of *Justice* and *Virtue*. The opinion that those and the like Words, stand for General Notions abstracted from all particular Persons and Actions, seems to have render'd Morality very difficult, and the Study thereof of small use to Mankind. And, in effect, one may make a great progress in *School-Ethics*, without ever being the wiser or better Man for it, or knowing how to behave himself in the affairs of Life, more to the Advantage of himself, or



his Neighbours, than he did before. This Hint may suffice, to let any one see, the Doctrine of *Abstraction*, has not a little contributed, towards spoiling the most useful Parts of Knowledge.

§ 101. The two great Provinces of Speculative Science, conversant about Ideas receiv'd from Sense, are *Natural Philosophy* and *Mathematics*; with regard to each of these I shall make some Observations. And first I shall say somewhat of Natural Philosophy. On this Subject it is, that the *Sceptics* triumph: All that stock of Arguments they produce to depreciate our Faculties, and make Mankind appear Ignorant and Low, are drawn principally from this Head, namely, that we are under an Invincible Blindness, as to the *True* and *Real* Nature of Things. This they exaggerate, and love to enlarge on. We are miserably Banter'd, say they, by our Senses, and amus'd only with the Outside and Shew of Things. The real Essence, the internal Qualities, and Constitution of every the meanest Object, is hid from  
our

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 147

our view; something there is, in every drop of Water, every grain of Sand, which it is beyond the Power of Human Understanding, to Fathom or Comprehend. But it is evident from what has been shewn, that all this Complaint is groundless, and that we are influenced by False Principles, to that degree as to mistrust our Senses, and think we know nothing, of those things which we perfectly comprehend.

§ 102. One great Inducement, to our pronouncing our selves Ignorant of the Nature of Things, is, the current Opinion that every thing includes within it self, the Cause of its Properties: Or that there is in each Object, an inward Essence, which is the Source whence its discernible Qualities flow, and whereon they depend. Some have pretended to account for Appearances by Occult Qualities, but of late they are mostly resolved into Mechanical Causes. *viz.* the Figure, Motion, Weight, &c. of insensible Particles: Whereas, in truth, there is no other Agent or Efficient Cause than

148 *Of the Principles* Part I.

*Spirit*, it being evident, that Motion, as well as all other *Ideas*, is perfectly Inert. *vid. Sect. XXV.* Hence, to endeavour to explain the production of Colours, Sounds, &c. by Figure, Motion, Magnitude and the like, must needs be labour in vain. And accordingly, we see the Attempts of that Kind, are not at all satisfactory. Which may be said, in general, of those Instances, wherein one Idea or Quality is assign'd for the Cause of another. I need not say, how many *Hypotheses* and Speculations are left out, and how much the study of Nature is Abridged by this Doctrine.

§ 103. The great Mechanical Principle now in Vogue is *Attraction*. That a Stone falls to the Earth, or the Sea swells towards the Moon, may to some appear sufficiently explain'd thereby. But how are we Enlighten'd by being told this is done by Attraction? Is it that, that Word signifies the manner of the Tendency, and that it is by the mutual drawing of Bodies, instead of their being impell'd or protruded towards each other?



Part I. of Human Knowledge. 149

other? But nothing is determin'd of the Manner or Action, and it may as truly (for ought we know) be termed *Impulse* or *Protrusion* as *Attraction*. Again, the Parts of Steel we see cohere firmly together, and this also is accounted for by Attraction; but in this, as in the other Instances, I do not perceive, that any thing is signified besides the Effect it self; for as to the manner of the Action whereby it is produced, or the Cause which produces it, these are not so much as aim'd at.

§ 104. Indeed, if we take a view of the several *Phænomena*, and compare them together, we may observe some likeness and conformity between them. For Example, in the Falling of a Stone to the Ground, In the Rising of the Sea towards the Moon, in Cohesion, Crystallization, &c. there is something alike, namely an Union or Mutual Approach of Bodies. So that any one of these, or the like *Phænomena*, may not seem Strange, or Surprising, to a Man who has nicely observ'd and compar'd the Effects of Nature.

ture. For that only is thought so which is uncommon, or a thing by it self, and out of the ordinary Course of our Observation. That Bodies shou'd tend towards the Center of the Earth, is not thought strange, because 'tis what we perceive every moment of our Lives. But that they shou'd have a like Gravitation towards the Center of the Moon, may seem odd and unaccountable to most Men, because it's discern'd only in the Tides. But a Philosopher, whose Thoughts take in a larger compass of Nature, having observ'd a certain similitude of Appearances, as well in the Heavens as the Earth, that argue innumerable Bodies to have a mutual Tendency towards each other, which he denotes by the general Name *Attraction*, whatever can be reduced to that he thinks justly accounted for. Thus he explains the Tides, by the Attraction of the Terrestrial Globe towards the Moon, which to him does not appear odd or anomalous, but only a particular Example of a general Rule or Law of Nature.

§ 105. If, therefore, we consider the Difference there is betwixt Natural Philosophers, and other Men, with regard to their Knowledge of the *Phænomena*, we shall find it consists, not in an exacter Knowledge of the efficient Cause that produces them, for that can be no other than the *Will of a Spirit*, but only in a greater Largeness of Comprehension, whereby Analogies, Harmonies, and Agreements are discover'd in the Works of Nature, and the particular Effects explain'd, *i. e.* reduced to general Rules, *vid. Sect. LXII.* which Rules grounded on the Analogy, and Uniformness observ'd in the Production of Natural Effects, are most agreeable, and sought after by the Mind, for that they extend our Prospect beyond what is present, and near to us, and enable us to make very probable Conjectures, touching Things that may have happen'd at very great distances of Time and Place, as well as to predict Things to come; which sort of Endeavour towards Omniscience, is much affected by the Mind.

§ 106. But



§ 106. But we shou'd proceed warily in such Things, for we are apt to lay too great a Stress on Analogies, and to the prejudice of Truth, humour that Eagerness of the Mind, whereby it is carried to extend its Knowledge into general Theoremes. For Example, In the business of Gravitation, or mutual Attraction, because it appears in many Instances, some are straightway for pronouncing it *Universal*; and that *to Attract, and be Attracted by, every other Body is an Essential Quality, inherent in all Bodies whatsoever*. Whereas, its evident the Fix'd Stars have no such Tendency towards each other; and so far is that Gravitation, from being *Essential* to Bodies, that, in some Instances a quite contrary Principle seems to shew it self: As in the Perpendicular Growth of Plants, and the Elasticity of the Air. There is nothing Necessary or Essential in the Case, but it depends intirely on the Will of the *Governing Spirit*, who causes certain Bodies to cleave together, or tend towards each other, according to various

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 153

ous Laws ; whilst he keeps others at a fix'd Distance ; and to some he gives a quite contrary Tendency to fly asunder, just, as he sees convenient.

§ 107. After what has been premis'd, I think we may lay down the following Conclusions. First, 'Tis plain, Philosophers amuse themselves in vain, when they inquire for any Natural, Efficient Cause, distinct from a *Mind* or *Spirit*. Secondly, Considering the whole Creation is the Workmanship of a *Wise and Good Agent*, it shou'd seem to become Philosophers, to employ their Thoughts (contrary to what some hold) about the Final Causes of Things : For besides that this wou'd prove a very pleasing Entertainment to the Mind, it might be of great Advantage, in that it not only discovers to us the Attributes of the CREATOR, but may also direct us in several Instances to the proper Uses and Applications of Things ; and I must confess, I see no reason, why pointing out the various Ends, to which Natural Things are adapted, and for which they

154      *Of the Principles*      Part I.

were originally, with unspeakable Wisdom, contriv'd, shou'd not be thought one good way of accounting for them, and altogether worthy a Philosopher. Thirdly, from what has been premis'd no reason can be drawn, why the History of Nature shou'd not still be studied, and Observations and Experiments made, which, that they are of use to Mankind, and enable us to draw any general Conclusions, is not the Result of any immutable Habitues, or Relations between Things themselves, but only of God's Goodness and Kindness to Men, in the Administration of the World. *vid. Sect. XXX and XXXI.* Fourthly, By a diligent Observation of the *Phænomena* within our View, we may discover the general Laws of Nature, and from them deduce the other *Phænomena*, I do not say *Demonstrate*; for all Deductions of that kind, depend on a Supposition that the Author of Nature always operates uniformly, and in a constant observance of those Rules, we take for Principles: Which we cannot evidently know.

§ 108. It



§ 108. It appears from *Señ. LXVI, &c.* that the steady, consistent Methods of Nature, may not unfitly be Stiled the *Language* of its *Author*, whereby he discovers his *Attributes* to our View, and directs us how to act for the Convenience and Felicity of Life. And to me, those Men who frame General Rules from the *Phænomena*, and afterwards derive the *Phænomena* from those Rules, seem to be Grammarians, and their Art the Grammar of Nature. Two ways there are of Learning a Language, either by Rule or by Practise: A Man may be well read in the Language of Nature, without understanding the Grammar of it, or being able to say, by what Rule a Thing is so or so. And as 'tis very possible to Write Improperly, thro' too strict an Observance of General Grammar-rules: So in Arguing from General Laws of Nature, 'tis not impossible we may stretch the Analogy too far, and by that means run into Mistakes.

§ 109. To carry on the resemblance, as in reading other Books, a Wise Man will chuse to fix his Thoughts, on the Sense and apply it to Use, rather than lay them out in Grammatical Remarks on the Language; so in perusing the Volume of Nature, methinks it is beneath the Dignity of the Mind, to affect an Exactness, in reducing each particular *Phænomenon* to general Rules, or shew how it follows from them. We shou'd propose to our selves nobler Views, namely to recreate and exalt the Mind, with a prospect of the Beauty, Order, Extent, and Variety of Natural Things: Hence, by proper Inferences, to enlarge our Notions of the Grandeur, Wisdom, and Beneficence of the CREATOR: And lastly, to make the several Parts of the Creation, so far as in us lies, subservient to the Ends they were design'd for, GOD'S Glory, and the Sustentation and Comfort of our Selves and Fellow-Creatures.

§ 110. The best Grammar of the kind we are speaking of, will be easily acknowledged.

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 157

knowleg'd to be a Treatise of Mechanics, demonstrated and applied to Nature, by a Philosopher of a Neighbouring Nation whom all the World Admire. I shall not take upon me to make Remarks, on the Performance of that Extraordinary Person : Only some Things he has advanced, so directly opposite to the Doctrine we have hitherto laid down, that we shou'd be wanting, in the regard due to the Authority of so great a Man, did we not take some notice of them. In the Entrance of that justly admired Treatise, Time, Space and Motion, are distinguished into *Absolute* and *Relative*, *True* and *Apparent*, *Mathematical* and *Vulgar* : Which Distinction, as it is at large explain'd by the Author, does suppose those Quantities to have an Existence without the Mind : And that they are ordinarily conceiv'd with relation to sensible Things, to which nevertheless, in their own Nature, they bear no Relation at all.

§ III. As for *Time*, as it is there taken in an absolute or abstracted Sense,  
for



for the Duration or Perseverance of the Existence of Things, I have nothing more to add concerning it, after what has been already said, on that Subject. Fortherest, this Celebrated Author holds there is an *Absolute Space*, which, being unperceivable to Sense, remains in it self similar and immoveable: And Relative Space to be the measure thereof, which being moveable, and defin'd by its Situation in respect of Sensible Bodies, is vulgarly taken for Immoveable Space. *Place* he Defines, to be that Part of Space which is occupied by any Body. And according as the Space is Absolute or Relative, so also is the Place. *Absolute Motion* is said to be the Translation of a Body, from Absolute Place to Absolute Place, as Relative Motion is, from one Relative Place to another. Now because the Parts of Absolute Space, do not fall under our Senses, instead of them we are obliged to use their Sensible Measures: And so define both Place and Motion with respect to Bodies, which we regard as immoveable. But it is said, in Philosophical Matters we must Abstract from

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 156

from our Senses, since it may be, that none of those Bodies, which seem to be quiescent, are truly so : And the same thing which is mov'd Relatively, may be really at rest. As likewise one and the same Body may be in Relative Rest and Motion, or even mov'd with contrary Relative Motions, At the same time, according as its place is variously defin'd. All which Ambiguity is to be found in the apparent Motions, but not at all in the true or absolute, which shou'd therefore be alone regarded in Philosophy. And the True, we are told, are distinguish'd from Apparent or Relative Motions, by the following Properties. First, In True or Absolute Motion, all Parts which preserve the same Position with respect to the Whole, partake of the Motions of the Whole. Secondly, The Place being moved, that which is placed therein is also mov'd : So that a Body moving in a place which is in Motion, doth participate the Motion of its Place. Thirdly, True Motion is never generated or changed, otherwise then by Force impressed on the Body itself. Fourthly, True Motion

tion is always changed, by Force impressed on the Body moved. Fifthly, In Circular Motion barely Relative, there is no Centrifugal Force, which nevertheless in that which is True or Absolute, is proportional to the Quantity of Motion.

§ 112. But notwithstanding what has been said, I must confess, it does not appear to me, that there can be any Motion other than *Relative*, So that to conceive Motion, there must be at least conceived two Bodies, whereof the Distance or position in regard to each other is varied. Hence if there was one only Body in being, it cou'd not possibly be mov'd. This to me seems very evident, in that the Idea I have of Motion does necessarily involve relation it. Whether others can conceive it otherwise, a little Attention may satisfy them.

§ 113. But tho' in every Motion, it be necessary to conceive more Bodies than one, yet it may be that one only is moved, namely that on which the Force  
causing



Part I. of Human Knowledge. 161

causing the change, in the Distance or Situation of the Bodies, is impressed. For however some may define Relative Motion, so as to term that Body *mov'd*, which changes its Distance from some other Body, whether the Force causing that Change were impressed on it, or no: Yet I can't assent to this, for since we are told, Relative Motion is that which is perceiv'd by Sense, and regarded in the ordinary Affairs of Life, it follows that every Man of common Sense knows what it is, as well as the best Philosopher: Now I ask any one, whether in his Sense of Motion, as he walks along the Streets, the Stones he passes over may be said to *move*, because they change Distance with his Feet? To me it appears, that tho' Motion includes a Relation of one thing to another, yet it is not necessary, that each term of the Relation be denominated from it. As a Man may think of somewhat which does not think, so a Body may be moved to, or from, another Body which which is not, therefore, it self in Moti-

Y

on

on, I mean *Relative Motion*, for other I am not able to conceive.

§ 114. As the Place happens to be variously defin'd, the Motion which is related to it varies. A Man in a Ship may be said to be Quiescent, with relation to the sides of the Vessel, and yet move, with relation to the Land. Or he may move Eastward in respect of the one, and Westward in respect of the other. In the common Affairs of Life, Men never go beyond the Earth, to define the place of any Body : And what is quiescent in respect of that, is accounted *absolutely* to be so. But Philosophers, who have a greater Extent of Thought, and juster Notions of the System of Things, discover even the Earth it self to be moved. In order therefore to fix their Notions, they seem to conceive the Corporeal World as Finite, and the utmost, unmoved Walls or Shell thereof to be the Place, whereby they estimate True Motions. If we found our own Conceptions, I believe we may find all the Absolute Motion

we

Part I. of Human Knowledge. 163

we can frame an Idea of, to be at Bottom no other than Relative Motion thus defined. For as I have already said, absolute Motion exclusive of all external Relation is incomprehensible: And to this kind of Relative Motion, all the above-mention'd Properties, Causes, and Effects ascribed to Absolute Motion will, if I mistake not, be found to agree. As to what is said of the Centrifugal Force, that it does not at all belong to Circular, Relative Motion: I do not see how this follows from the Experiment which is brought to prove it. See *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, p. 9. in *Schol. Def. VIII.* For the Water in the Vessel, at that time wherein it is said to have the greatest Relative, Circular Motion, has, I think, no Motion at all: As is plain from the foregoing Section.

§ 115. For, to denominate a Body *Moved*, it is requisite, first, that it change its Distance or Situation with regard to some other Body, Secondly, that the force occasioning that Change be im-

Y 2 pressed



pressed on it. If either of these be wanting, I do not think that agreeably to the Sense of Mankind, or the Propriety of Language, a Body can be said to be in Motion. I grant, indeed, that it is possible for us to think a Body, which we see change its Distance from some other, to be moved, tho' it have no force impressed on it, (in which Sense there may be apparent Motion,) but then it is, because the Force causing the change of Distance, is imagin'd by us to be impress'd on that Body thought to move. Which, indeed, shews we are capable of mistaking a thing to be in Motion which is not, but does not prove that, in the common acceptation of *Motion*, a Body is moved meerly because it changes Distance from another; since as soon as we are undeceiv'd, and find that the moving Force was not communicated to it, we no longer hold it to be moved. So on the other hand, when one only Body (the Parts whereof preserve a given Position between themselves) is imagin'd to Exist; some there are who think that it can be moved all manner  
of

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 165  
of ways, tho' without any change of  
Distance or Situation to any other Bo-  
dies; which we shou'd not deny, if they  
meant only that it might have an im-  
pressed Force, which, upon the bare crea-  
tion of other Bodies, wou'd produce a  
Motion of any certain Quantity and De-  
termination. But that an actual Moti-  
on (distinct from the impressed Force,  
or Power productive of Change of Place  
in case there were Bodies present where-  
by to define it) can Exist in such a sin-  
gle Body, I must confess I am not able  
to comprehend.

§ 116. From what has been said, it  
follows, that the Philosophic Considera-  
tion of Motion, does not imply the be-  
ing of an *Absolute Space*, distinct from  
that which is perceiv'd by Sense, and  
related to Bodies: Which that it cannot  
Exist without the Mind, is clear upon  
the same Principles, that demonstrate  
the like of all other Objects of Sense.  
And, perhaps, if we inquire narrowly  
into the Matter, we shall find we can-  
not even frame an Idea of *Pure Space*,  
exclu-

exclusive of all Body. This I must confess, is above my Capacity, as being a most Abstract Idea. When I excite a Motion in some part of my Body, if it be Free or without Resistance, I say there is *Space*: But if I find a Resistance, then I say there is *Body*: and in proportion as the Resistance to Motion is lesser or greater, I say the *Space* is more or less *Pure*. So that when I speak of pure or empty Space, it is not to be supposed, that the Word *Space* stands for an Idea distinct from, or conceivable without Body and Motion. Tho' indeed, we are apt to think, every Noun Substantive stands for a distinct Idea, that may be separated from all others: Which has occasion'd infinite Mistakes. When therefore supposing all the World to be Annihilated besides my own Body, I say there still remains *Pure Space*: Thereby nothing else is meant, but only that I conceive it possible, for the Limbs of my Body to be mov'd on all sides, without the least Resistance: But if that too were Annihilated, then there cou'd be no Motion, and consequently no Space.

Some,



Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 167

Some, perhaps, may think the Sense of Seeing does furnish 'em with the Idea of Pure Space; but it is plain from what we have elsewhere shewn, that the Ideas of Space and Distance are not obtain'd by that Sense. See the *Essay concerning Vision*.

§ 117. What is here laid down seems to put an end, to all those Disputes, and Difficulties, that have sprung up amongst the Learned concerning the nature of *Pure Space*. But the chief Advantage arising from it, is, that we are freed from that dangerous *Dilemma*, to which several, who have imploy'd their Thoughts on that Subject, imagine themselves reduced. *viz.* of thinking either that Real Space is God, or else that there is something beside God which is Eternal, Uncreated, Infinite, Indivisible, Immutable, &c. Both which may justly be thought pernicious and absurd Notions. It is certain that not a few Divines, as well as Philosophers of great Note, have, from the Difficulty they found in conceiving, either Limits or Annihilation of  
of

168 *Of the Principles* Part I.

of Space, concluded it must be *Divine*. And some of late, have set themselves particularly to shew, the Incommunicable Attributes of God agree to it. Which Doctrine, how unworthy soever it may seem of the Divine Nature, yet, I must confess, I do not See how we can get clear of it, so long as we adhere to the receiv'd Opinions.

§ 118. Hitherto of Natural Philosophy : We come now to make some Inquiry concerning that other great Branch of Speculative Knowledge, *viz. Mathematics*. These, how Celebrated soever they may be, for their clearness and certainty of Demonstration, which is hardly any where 'else to be found, cannot nevertheless be suppos'd altogether free from Mistakes, if so be that in their Principles there lurks some secret Error, which is common to the Professors of those Sciences with the rest of Mankind. Mathematicians, tho' they deduce their Theorems from a great Height of Evidence, yet their first Principles are limited by the consideration of Quantity :  
And

Part I. *of Human Knowledge.* 169

And they do not ascend into any Inquiry concerning those Transcendental Maxims, which influence all the particular Sciences, each Part whereof, Mathematics not excepted, does consequently participate of the Errors involved in them. That the Principles laid down by Mathematicians are true, and their way of Deduction from those Principles clear and incontrollable, we do not deny. But we hold, there may be certain Erroneous Maxims of greater Extent than the Object of Mathematics, and, for that reason, not expressly mention'd, tho' tacitly supposed throughout the whole progress of that Science; and that the ill effects of those secret, unexamined Errors are diffused thro' all the Branches thereof. To be plain, we suspect the Mathematicians are no less deeply concern'd than other Men, in the Errors arising from the Doctrine of Abstract, General Ideas, and the Existence of Objects without the Mind.

§ 119. *Arithmetic* has been thought to have for its Object, Abstract Ideas of  
Z *Number,*



170 *Of the Principles* Part I.

*Number.* Of which to understand the Properties and mutual Habitues, is supposed no mean part of Speculative Knowledge. The Opinion of the pure and intellectual Nature of Numbers in Abstract, has made 'em in esteem with those Philosophers, who seem to have affected an uncommon Fineness and Elevation of Thought. It hath set a Price on the most trifling Numerical Speculations, which in practice are of no use, but serve only for Amusement. And hath heretofore so far infected the Minds of some, that they have dreamt of mighty *Mysteries* involved in Numbers, and attempted the Explication of Natural Things by them. But if we narrowly inquire into our own Thoughts, and consider what has been premised, we may perhaps entertain a low Opinion of those high Flights and Abstractions, and look on all Inquiries about Numbers, only as so many *difficiles nugæ*, so far as they are not subservient to practise, and promote the benefit of Life.

§ 120. Unity in Abstract we have before

Part I. of Human Knowledge. 171

before consider'd *vid. Sect. XIII.* from which and what has been said in the Introduction, it plainly follows, there is not any such Idea. But Number being defin'd a *Collection of Unites*, we may conclude that, if there be no such thing as Unity or Unite in Abstract, there are no Ideas of Number in Abstract denoted by the Numeral Names and Figures. The Theories, therefore, in Arithmetic, if they are abstracted from the Names and Figures, as likewise from all Use and Practice, as well as from the particular things number'd, can be supposed to have nothing at all for their Object. Hence we may see, how intirely the Science of Numbers is subordinate to Practice, and how jejune and trifling it becomes, when consider'd as a matter of meer Speculation.

§ 121. However, since there may be some, who, deluded by the specious Shew of Discovering Abstracted Verities, waste their time in Arithmetical Theorems and Problemes, which have not any Use; It will not be amiss, if we more

fully consider, and expose the Vanity of that Pretence ; And this will plainly appear, by taking a view of Arithmetic in its Infancy, and observing what it was that originally put Men on the Study of that Science, and to what Scope they directed it. It is natural to think that at first, Men, for ease of Memory and help of Computation, made use of Counters, or in writing of Single Stroaks, Points or the like, each whereof was made to signify an Unite *i. e.* some one thing of whatever Kind they had occasion to reckon. Afterwards, they found out the more compendious ways, of making one Character stand in place of several Stroaks, or Points. And lastly, the Notation of the *Arabians* or *Indians* came into use, wherein by the repetition of a few Characters or Figures, and varying the Signification of each Figure according to the the place it obtains, all Numbers may be most aptly express'd : Which seems to have been done in Imitation of Language, so that an exact Analogy is observ'd betwixt the Notation by Figures, and Names, the nine simple Figures



Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 173

gures answering the nine first numeral Names, and Places in the former corresponding to Denominations in the latter. And agreeably to those Conditions of the simple and local Value of Figures, were contrived Methods of finding from the given Figures or Marks of the Parts, what Figures and how placed, are proper to denote the whole or *vice versa*. And having found the sought Figures, the same Rule or Analogy being observ'd throughout, it is easy to read them into Words; and so the Number becomes perfectly known. For then the Number of any particular Things is said to be known, when we know the Name or Figures (with their due arrangement) that according to the standing Analogy belong to them. For these Signs being known, we can by the Operations of Arithmetic, know the Signs of any Part of the particular Sums signified by them; and thus computing in Signs, (because of the connexion establish'd betwixt them and the distinct multitudes of Things, whereof one is taken for an Unite, we may be able  
rightly

174 *Of the Principles* Part I.

rightly to sum Up, Divide, and Proportion the things Themselves that we intend to Number.

§ 122. In *Arithmetic*, therefore, we regard not the *Things* but the *Signs*, which nevertheless are not regarded for their own sake, but because they direct us how to act with relation to Things, and dispose rightly of them. Now agreeably to what we have before observ'd, of words in general (*vid. Sect. XIX Introd.*) it happens here likewise, that abstract Ideas are thought to be signified by Numeral Names or Characters, while they do not suggest Ideas of particular Things to our Minds. I shall not at present, enter into a more particular Dissertation on this Subject, but only observe that it's evident from what has been said, those Things which pass for abstract Truths and Theorems concerning Numbers, are, in reality, conversant about no Object distinct from particular numerable Things, except only Names and Characters, which originally came to be consider'd, on no other account

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 175

count but their being *Signs*, or capable to represent aptly, whatever particular Things Men had need to compute. Whence it follows, that to study them for their own sake wou'd be just as wise, and to as good purpose, as if a Man neglecting the true Use or original Intention and subserviency of Language, shou'd spend his time in impertinent Criticisms upon Words, or Reasonings and Controversies purely Verbal.

§ 123. From Numbers we proceed to speak of *Extension*, which is the Object of Geometry. The *Infinite* Divisibility of *Finite* Extension tho' it is not expressly laid down, either as an Axiom or Theoreme in the Elements of that Science, yet, is throughout the same every where suppos'd, and thought to have so inseparable and essential a Connexion, with the Principles and Demonstrations in Geometry, that Mathematicians never admit it into Doubt, or make the least Question of it. And as this Notion is the Source from whence do spring, all those Amusing Geometrical Paradoxes,



doxes, which have such a direct Repugnancy to the plain, common Sense of Mankind, and are admitted with so much Reluctance, into a Mind not yet debauched by Learning: So is it the principal occasion of all that nice and extream Subtilty, which renders the Study of *Mathematics* so very difficult and tedious. Hence, if we can make it appear, that no Finite Extension contains innumerable Parts, or is infinitely Divisible, it follows that we shall at once clear the Science of Geometry, from a great number of Difficulties and Contradictions which have ever been esteemed a Reproach to Human Reason, and withal make the Attainment thereof, a business of much less Time and Pains, then it hitherto has been.

§ 124. Every particular, Finite Extension, which may possibly be the Object of our Thought, is an *Idea* Existing only in the Mind, and consequently each Part thereof must be perceiv'd. If, therefore, I cannot perceive innumerable Parts, in any Finite Extension that I consider,

Part I. of Human Knowledge. 177

it is certain they are not contained in it: But it's evident, that I can't distinguish innumerable Parts in any particular Line, Surface, or Solid, which I either perceive by Sense, or Figure to my self in my Mind: Wherefore I conclude they are not contained in it. Nothing can be plainer to me, than that the Extensions I have in View, are no other than my own Ideas, and it is no less plain, that I cannot resolve any one of my Ideas, into an infinite Number of other Ideas, that is, that they are not infinitely Divisible. If by *Finite Extension* be meant something distinct from a Finite Idea: I declare I do not know what that is, and so cannot affirm or deny any thing of it. But if the terms *Extension, Parts, &c.* are taken in any Sense conceivable *i. e.* for Ideas; then to say, a Finite Quantity or Extension consists of Parts infinite in Number, is so manifest and glaring a Contradiction, that every one at first sight acknowledges it to be so. And it's impossible, it shou'd ever gain the assent of any reasonable Creature, who is not brought

A a

to

178      *Of the Principles*      Part I.

to it by gentle and flow Degrees, as a Pagan Convert to the belief of *Transubstantiation*. Ancient and rooted Prejudices do often pass into Principles : And those Propositions which once obtain the force and credit of a *Principle*, are not only themselves, but likewise whatever's deducible from them, thought privileg'd from all Examination. And there's no Absurdity so gross, which, by this means, the Mind of Man may not be prepared to swallow.

§ 125. He whose Understanding is prepossess'd with the Doctrine of Abstract, general Ideas, may be easily persuaded, that (whatever be thought of the Ideas of Sense,) Extension in *Abstract* is infinitely Divisible. And any one, who thinks the Objects of Sense Exist without the Mind, will not stick to affirm, a Line but an Inch long may contain innumerable Parts, really Existing, tho' too small to be discern'd. These Errors are grafted, as well in the Minds of *Geometricians*, as of other Men, and have a like influence on their Reasonings ;



Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 179

nings; and it were no difficult thing, to shew how the Arguments from Geometry made use of to support the infinite divisibility of Extension, are bottom'd on them. But this, if it be thought necessary, we may hereafter find a proper place to treat of in a particular manner. At present we shall only observe in general, whence it is the Mathematicians are all so fond and tenacious of that Doctrine.

§ 126. It has been observ'd in another place, that the Theorems and Demonstrations in Geometry are conversant about Universal Ideas. *vid. Sect. XV. Introd.* Where it is explain'd in what Sense this ought to be understood, namely, the particular Lines and Figures included in the Diagram, are supposed to stand for innumerable Others of different Sizes, or, in other Words, the Geometer considers them abstracting from their Magnitude, which does not imply, that he forms an Abstract Idea, but only that he cares not what the particular Magnitude is, whether Great or Small,

but looks on that as a thing indifferent to the Demonstration : Hence it follows, that a Line in the Scheme, but an Inch long, must be spoken of, as tho' it contain'd ten-thousand Parts, since it is regarded, not in it self, but as it is universal, and it is universal only in its Signification, whereby it represents innumerable Lines greater than it self, in which may be distinguish'd ten-thousand Parts or more, tho' there may not in it. After this manner, the properties of the Lines signified are (by a very usual Figure) transfer'd to the Sign, and thence, thro' Mistake, thought to appertain to it consider'd in its own nature.

§ 127. Because there is no number of Parts so great, but its possible there may be a Line containing more, the Inch-line is said to contain Parts more than any assignable Number; which is true, not of the Inch taken absolutely, but only for the things signified by it. But Men not retaining that Distinction in their Thoughts, slide into a belief, that the small particular Line described on Paper contains

Part I. of Human Knowledge. 181

contains in it self Parts innumerable. There is no such thing as the ten-thousandth Part of an *Inch*; but there is of a *Mile* or *Diameter of the Earth*, which may be signified by that *Inch*. When therefore, I Delineate a Triangle on Paper, and take one side not above an *Inch*, for Example, in length to be the *Radius*: This I consider as divided into 10000 or 100000 Parts, or more. For tho' the ten-thousandth Part of that Line, consider'd in it self, is nothing at all, and consequently may be neglected without any Error or Inconveniency; yet these described Lines being only Marks, standing for greater Quantities, whereof, it may be, the ten-thousandth Part is very considerable, it follows that, to prevent notable Errors in Practice, the *Radius* must be taken of 10000 Parts, or more.

§ 128. From what has been said the reason is plain why, to the end any Theorem become universal in its Use, its necessary we speak of the Lines described on Paper, as tho' they contain'd Parts which



which really they do not. In doing of which, if we examine the matter thoroughly, we shall, perhaps, discover that we cannot conceive an Inch it self as consisting of, or being divisible into, a thousand Parts, but only some other Line which is far greater than an Inch, and represented by it. And that when we say a Line is *infinitely Divisible*. We mean (if we mean any thing) a Line which is *infinitely Great*. What we have here observ'd seems to be the chief Cause, why, to suppose the infinite divisibility of Finite Extension, has been thought necessary in Geometry.

§ 129. The several Absurdities and Contradictions which flow'd from this false Principle might, one wou'd think, have been esteem'd so many Demonstrations against it. But, by I know not what *Logic*, it is held that Proofs *a posteriori* are not to be admitted, against Propositions relating to Infinity. As tho', it were not impossible, even for an Infinite Mind, to reconcile Contradictions. Or as if any thing Absurd and Repugnant

Part I. of Human Knowledge. 183

Repugnant cou'd have a necessary connexion with Truth, or flow from it. But whoever considers the weakness of this Pretence, will think it was contrived on purpose, to humour the Laziness of the Mind, which had rather acquiesce in an indolent Scepticism, than be at the Pains, to go through with a severe Examination of those Principles it has ever embraced for true.

§ 130. Of late the Speculations about Infinites have run so high, and grown to such strange Notions, as have occasion'd no small Scruples and Disputes, among the Geometers of the present Age. Some there are of great Note, who not content with holding, that Finite Lines may be divided into an Infinite number of Parts, do yet farther maintain, that each of those Infinitesimals is it self subdivisible, into an infinity of other Parts, or Infinitesimals of a second Order, and so on *ad infinitum*. These, I say, assert, there are Infinitesimals of infinitesimals of Infinitesimals, &c. without ever coming to an end. So that,  
accord-

according to them an Inch does not barely contain an infinite number of Parts, but an Infinity of an Infinity of an Infinity *ad infinitum* of Parts. Others there be who hold, all orders of Infinitesimals below the first to be nothing at all, thinking it, with good reason, Absurd, to imagine there is any positive Quantity or Part of Extension, which, tho' multiplied Infinitely, can never equal the smallest given Extension. And yet on the other hand, it seems no less Absurd, to think the Square, Cube, or other Power of a positive, real Root, shou'd it self be nothing at all; which they, who hold Infinitesimals of the first Order, denying all of the subsequent Orders, are obliged to maintain.

§ 131. Have we not, therefore, reason to conclude, they are *both* in the wrong, and that there is in effect no such thing as Parts infinitely Small, or an infinite number of Parts contain'd in any Finite Quantity? But you'll say, that if this Doctrine obtains, it will follow, the very Foundations of Geometry are destroy'd :



Part I. of Human Knowledge. 185

destroy'd : And those Great Men who, have rais'd that Science to so astonishing an Height, have been all the while building a Castle in the Air. To this it may be Replied, that whatever is useful in Geometry, and promotes the benefit of Human Life, does still remain firm and unshaken on our Principles. That Science consider'd as Practical, will rather receive Advantage, than any Prejudice from what has been said. But to set this in a due Light, and shew how Lines and Figures may be measur'd, and their Properties investigated, without supposing Finite Extension to be infinitely Divisible, may be the proper Business of another place. For the rest, tho' it shou'd follow that some of the more intricate and subtile Parts of *Speculative Mathematics* may be pared of, without any prejudice to Truth; yet I do not see, what Damage will be thence derived to Mankind. On the contrary, I think it were highly to be wish'd, that Men of the greatest Abilities and most obstinate Application, wou'd draw off their Thoughts from those Amusements,

186     *Of the Principles*     Part I.  
and imploy them in the study of such  
Things, as lie nearer the concerns of  
Life, or have a more direct Influence  
on the Manners.

§ 132. If it be said that several Theorems undoubtedly true, are discover'd by methods in which Infinitesimals are made use of, which cou'd never have been, if their Existence included a contradiction in it. I answer, that upon a thorough Examination it will not be found, that in any Instance it is necessary to make use of or conceive Infinitesimal Parts of finite Lines, or even Quantities less than the *Minimum Sensibile*: Nay it will be evident this is never done, it being impossible. And whatever Mathematicians may think of *Fluxions* or the *Differential Calculus* and the like, a little Reflexion will shew them, that in working by those Methods, they do not conceive or imagine Lines or Surfaces less than what are perceivable to Sense. They may, indeed, call those little and almost Insensible Quantities *Infinitesimals* or *Infinitesimals of Infinitesimals*,

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 187

*mals*, if they please : But at Bottom this is all, they being in truth Finite, nor does the Solution of Problemes require the supposing any other. But this will be more clearly made out hereafter.

§ 133. By what we have hitherto said, 'tis plain that very numerous and and important Errors have taken their Rise, from those false Principles which were impugned in the foregoing Parts of this Treatise. And the Opposites of those erroneous Tenents, at the same time, appear to be most fruitful Principles, from whence do flow innumerable Consequences highly advantageous, to true Philosophy as well as to Religion. Particularly, *Matter* or *the Absolute Existence of Corporeal Objects*, have been shewn to be that wherein the most avow'd and pernicious Enemies of all Knowledge, whether Human or Divine, have ever placed their chief Strength and Confidence. And surely, if by distinguishing the real Existence of unthinking Things from their being per-



188 *Of the Principles* Part I.

ceiv'd, and allowing them a Sub-  
 stance of their own out of the Minds  
 of Spirits, no one thing is explained in  
 Nature, but, on the contrary, a great  
 many inexplicable Difficulties arise : If  
 the Supposition of Matter is barely pre-  
 carious, as not being grounded on so  
 much as one single Reason : If its Con-  
 sequences cannot endure the light of  
 Examination and free Inquiry, but  
 screen themselves under the dark and  
 general pretence of *Infinities being Incom-  
 prehensible* : If withal the Removal of  
 this *Matter* be not attended with the  
 least evil Consequence, if it be not even  
 missed in the World, but every thing  
 as well, nay much easier conceiv'd  
 without it : If in fine, both *Sceptics* and  
*Atheists* are for ever silenced upon sup-  
 posing only Spirits and Ideas, and this  
 Scheme of Things is perfectly agreeable  
 both to *Reason* and *Religion* : Methinks  
 we may expect it shou'd be admitted  
 and firmly embraced, tho' it were pro-  
 pos'd only as an *Hypothesis*, and the  
 Existence of Matter had been allow'd  
 possible, which yet, I think, we  
 have

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 189  
have evidently demonstrated that it  
is not.

§ 134. True it is, that in consequence of the foregoing Principles, several Disputes and Speculations, which are esteem'd no mean Parts of Learning, are rejected as useless, and in effect conversant about nothing at all. But how great a Prejudice soever against our Notions, this may give to those who have already been deeply Engag'd, and made large Advances in Studies of that Nature : Yet by Others, we hope it will not be thought any just ground of Dislike, to the Principles and Tenents herein laid down, that they abridge the labour of Study, and make Human Sciences far more Clear, Compendious, and Attainable than they were before.

§ 135. Having dispatch'd what we intended to say concerning the knowledge of *Ideas*, the Method we propos'd leads us, in the next place, to treat of *Spirits* : With regard to which, perhaps, Human Knowledge is not so deficient

ficient as is vulgarly imagined. The great Reason that's assign'd, for our being thought Ignorant of the nature of Spirits, is, our not having an Idea of it. But surely it ought not to be look'd on as a defect in a Human Understanding, that it does not perceive the Idea of *Spirit*, if it is manifestly impossible there shou'd be any such *Idea*. And this if I mistake not, has been demonstrated in *Seet XXVII* to which I shall here add that a Spirit has been shewn to be the only Substance, or Support wherein Unthinking Beings or Ideas can Exist : But that this *Substance* which supports or perceives Ideas, shou'd it self be an *Idea* or like an *Idea* is evidently Absurd.

§ 136. It will perhaps be said, that, we want a Sense (as some have imagin'd) proper to know Substances without, which if we had, we might know our own Soul, as we do a Triangle. To this I answer, that in case we had a new Sense bestow'd upon us, we cou'd only receive thereby some new Sensations



Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 191

ons or Ideas of Sense. But, I believe, no Body will say, that what he means by the terms *Soul* and *Substance*, is only some particular sort of Idea or Sensation. We may therefore infer, that, all things duly consider'd, it is not more reasonable to think our Faculties defective, in that they do not furnish us with an Idea of Spirit, or Active, Thinking Substance, than it wou'd be if we shou'd blame them for not being able to comprehend a *round Square*.

§ 137. From the opinion that Spirits are to be known after the manner of an Idea or Sensation, have risen many absurd and heterodox Tenents, and much Scepticism about the Nature of the Soul. 'Tis even probable, that this Opinion may have produced a doubt in some, whether they had any Soul at all distinct from their Body, since upon inquiry they cou'd not find they had an Idea of it. That an *Idea* which is Inactive, and the Existence whereof consists in being Perceiv'd, shou'd be the Image or Likeness of an Agent

Agent subsisting by it self, seems to need no other Refutation, than barely attending to what is meant by those Words. But, perhaps, you'll say, that tho' an *Idea* cannot resemble a *Spirit*, in its Thinking, Acting, or Subsisting by it self, yet it may in some other respects: And it is not necessary, that an Idea or Image be in all respects like the Original.

§ 138. I answer, If it does not in those mention'd, it is impossible it shou'd represent it in any other thing. Do but leave out the Power of Willing, Thinking, and Perceiving Ideas, and there remains nothing else wherein the Idea can be like a Spirit. For by the Word *Spirit* we mean only that which Thinks, Wills, and Perceives, this, and this alone, constitutes the Signification of that Term. If, therefore, it is impossible that any degree of those Powers, shou'd be represented in an Idea or Notion, 'tis evident there can be no Idea or Notion, of a Spirit.

§ 139. But

Part I. of Human Knowledge. 193

§ 139. But it will be objected, that if there is no Idea signified by the terms *Soul*, *Spirit*, and *Substance*, they are wholly insignificant, or have no meaning in 'em. I answer those Words do mean or signify a real Thing, which is neither an Idea nor like an Idea, but that which perceives Ideas, and Wills, and Reasons about them. What I am my self, that which I denote by the term I, is the same with what is meant by *Soul*, or *Spiritual Substance*. But if I shou'd say, that I was nothing, or that I was an Idea or Notion, nothing cou'd be more evidently Absurd than either of these Propositions. You'll perhaps, insist, that this is only Quarrelling at a Word, and that since the immediate significations of other Names, are by common consent called *Ideas*, no reason can be assign'd, why that which is signified by the name *Spirit* or *Soul* may not partake in the same Appellation. I answer, all the Unthinking Objects of the Mind agree, in that they are intirely Passive, and their Existence

C c



194      *Of the Principles*      Part I.

istence consists only in being perceiv'd : Whereas a Soul or Spirit is an active being, whose Existence consists not in Being perceiv'd, but in perceiving Ideas and Thinking. It is, therefore, necessary in order to prevent Equivocation and confounding Natures perfectly disagreeing and unlike, that we distinguish between *Spirit* and *Idea*. *Vid. Sect. XXVII.*

§ 140. In a large Sense, indeed, we may be said to have an Idea of *Spirit*, that is, we understand the meaning of the Word otherwise we cou'd not affirm or deny any thing of it. Moreover, as we conceive the Ideas that are in the Minds of other Spirits, by means of our own, which we suppose to be Resemblances of them. So we know other Spirits by means of our own Soul, which, in that Sense, is the Image or Idea of them, it having a like respect to other Spirits, that Blueness or Heat by me perceiv'd has to those Ideas perceiv'd by another.

§ 141. The

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 195

§ 141. The *natural Immortality of the Soul* is a necessary Consequence of the foregoing Doctrine, But before we attempt to prove this, 'tis fit that we explain the meaning of that Tenent. It must not be supposed, that they who assert the natural Immortality of the Soul are of opinion, that, it is absolutely incapable of Annihilation, even by the infinite power of the CREATOR, who first gave it Being. But only that it is not liable to be broken, or dissolv'd, by the ordinary Laws of Nature or Motion. They indeed, who hold the Soul of Man to be only a thin, vital Flame, or System of animal Spirits, make it Perishing and Corruptible as the Body, since there is nothing more easily dissipated than such a Being, which it is naturally impossible shou'd survive the Ruin of the Tabernacle, wherein it is inclos'd. And this Notion has been greedily embraced, and cherish'd by the worst Part of Mankind, as the most effectual Antidote against all Impressions of Vertue and Religion. But it has

C c - 2

been

196 *Of the Principles* Part I.

been made evident, that Bodies, of what frame or Texture soever, are barely passive Ideas in the Mind, which is more distant and heterogeneous from them, than Light is from Darkness. We have shewn that the Soul is Indivisible, Incorporeal, Unextended, and it is consequently Incorruptible. Nothing can be plainer, than that the Motions, Changes, Decays, and Dissolutions which we hourly see befall natural Bodies (and which is what we mean by the *course of Nature*) cannot possibly affect an Active, Simple, Uncompounded Substance: Such a being, therefore, is Indissoluble by the force of Nature, that is to say, *the Soul of Man is naturally Immortal.*

§ 142. After what has been said, 'tis, I suppose, plain that our Souls are not to be known in the same manner as senseless, inactive Objects, or by way of *Idea*. *Spirits* and *Ideas* are things so wholly different, that when we say, *they Exist, they are Known*, or the like, these Words must not be thought to signify



Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 197

signifie any thing common to both Natures. There is nothing alike or common in them : And to expect, that by any multiplication or enlargement of our Faculties, we may be enabled to know a Spirit as we do a Triangle, seems as Absurd as if we shou'd hope to see a Sound. This is inculcated because I imagine it may be of Moment, towards clearing several important Questions, and preventing some very dangerous Errors concerning the Nature of the Soul.

§ 143. It will not be amiss to add, that the Doctrine of *Abstract Ideas* has had no small share, in rendering those Sciences Intricate and obscure, which are particularly conversant about Spiritual Things. Men have imagin'd they cou'd frame abstract Notions, of the Powers and Acts of the Mind, and consider them prescinded, as well from the Mind or Spirit it self, as from their respective Objects and Effects. Hence a great number of dark and ambiguous Terms, presum'd to stand for abstract Notions,

198 *Of the Principles* Part I.

Notions, have been introduced into Metaphysics and Morality, and from these have grown Infinite Distractions and Disputes amongst the Learned.

§ 144. But nothing seems more to have contributed, towards engaging Men in Controversies and Mistakes, with regard to the Nature and Operations of the Mind, than the being used to speak of those things, in Terms borrow'd from sensible Ideas. For Example, The Will is termed the *Motion* of the Soul: This infuses a Belief, that the Mind of Man is as a Ball in Motion, impell'd and determin'd by the Objects of Sense, as necessarily as that is by the Stroak of a Racket. Hence arise endless Scruples and Errors of dangerous Consequence in Morality. All which, I doubt not, may be cleared, and Truth appear Plain, Uniform, and Consistent, cou'd but Philosophers be prevail'd on, to depart from some receiv'd prejudices and modes of Speech, and retiring into themselves attentively consider their own meaning. But the Difficulties arising on this Head, demand

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 199

a more particular Disquisition, than suits with the Design of this Treatise.

§ 145. From what has been said, 'tis plain, that we cannot know the Existence of other Spirits, otherwise than by their Operations, or the Ideas by them excited in us. I perceive several Motions, Changes, and Combinations of Ideas, that inform me there are certain particular Agents, like my self, which accompany them, and concur in their Production. Hence, the Knowledge I have of other Spirits is not immediate, as is the Knowledge of my Ideas, but depending on the Intervention of Ideas, by me refer'd to Agents or Spirits distinct from my self, as Effects or concomitant Signs.

§ 146. But tho' there be some things which convince us, Human Agents are concern'd in producing them; yet it is evident to every one, that those things which are call'd the works of Nature, *i. e.* the far greater part of the Ideas or Sensations perceived by us, are not produced



duced by, or dependent on, the Wills of Men. There is therefore some other Spirit that causes them, since it is repugnant that they shou'd subsist by themselves. See Sect. XXIX. But if we attentively consider the constant Regularity, Order, and Concatenation of Natural Things, the surprising Magnificence, Beauty and Perfection of the larger, and the Exquisite Contrivance of the smaller Parts of the Creation, together with the exact Harmony and Correspondence of the whole, but, above all, the never enough admir'd Laws of Pain and Pleasure, and the Instincts or natural Inclinations, Appetites, and Passions of Animals, I say if we consider all these things, and at the same time attend to the meaning and import of the Attributes One, Eternal, Infinitely Wise, Good and Perfect, we shall clearly perceive that they belong to the aforesaid Spirit, *who works all in all, and by whom all things consist.*

§ 147. Hence it is evident, that God, is known as certainly and immediately

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 201

diately as any other Mind or Spirit whatsoever, distinct from our selves. We may even assert, that the Existence of God is far more evidently perceiv'd than the Existence of Men; because the Effects of Nature are infinitely more numerous and considerable, than those ascribed to Human Agents. There is not any one Mark that denotes a Man, or Effect produced by him, which does not more strongly evince the Being of that Spirit, who is the *Author of Nature*. For it is evident that in affecting other Persons, the will of Man has no other Object, than barely the Motion of the Limbs of his Body, but that such a Motion shou'd be attended by, or excite, any Idea in the Mind of another, depends wholly on the Will of the CREATOR. He alone it is who, *upholding all things by the word of his Power*, maintains that Intercourse between Spirits, whereby they are able to perceive the Existence of each other. And yet this pure and clear Light which enlightens every one, is it self invisible to the greatest part of Mankind.

§ 148 It seems to be a general Pre-  
tence of the Unthinking Herd, that they  
cannot see GOD. Cou'd we but see  
him, say they, as we see a Man, we  
shou'd believe that he is, and believing  
obey his Commands. But alas we  
need only open our Eyes to see the So-  
vereign Lord of all Things, with a  
more full and clear view than we do  
any one of our Fellow-Creatures. Not  
that I imagine, we see GOD (as some  
will have it) by a direct and immediate  
View, or see Corporeal Things, not by  
themselves but, by seeing that which  
represents them in the Essence of GOD,  
which Doctrine is, I must confess, to  
me Incomprehensible. But I shall ex-  
plain my Meaning. A Human Spirit  
or Person is not perceiv'd by Sense, as  
not being an Idea; when therefore we  
see the Colour, Size, Figure, and Moti-  
ons of a Man, we perceive only certain  
Sensations or Ideas excited in our own  
Minds: And these, being exhibited to  
our view in sundry, distinct Collections  
serve to mark out unto us the Existence  
of



Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 203

of Finite, and Created Spirits like our selves. Hence 'tis plain, we do not see a Man, if by *Man* is meant that which Lives, Moves, Perceives, and Thinks as we do: But only such a certain Collection of Ideas, as directs us to think there is a distinct Principle of Thought and Motion, like to our selves, accompanying and represented by it. And after the same manner we see GOD; all the difference is, that, whereas some one finite and narrow assemblage of Ideas denotes a particular Human Mind, whithersoever we direct our view, we do at all times and in all places, perceive manifest Tokens of the Divinity: Every thing we See, Hear, Feel or any wise perceive by Sense, being a Sign or Effect of the Power of GOD: as is our Perception of those very Motions, which are produced by Men.

§ 149. 'Tis therefore plain, that nothing can be more evident to any one that's capable of the least Reflexion, than the Existence of GOD, or a Spirit who is intimately present to our Minds,

producing in them all that variety of Ideas or Sensations, which continually affect us, on whom we have an absolute and intire Dependence, in short *in whom we Live, and Move, and have our Being.* That the Discovery of this great Truth which lies so near and obvious to the Mind, shou'd be attain'd to by the Reason of so very few, is a sad instance of the Stupidity and Inattention of Men, who, tho' they are Surrounded with such clear manifestations of the Deity, are yet so little affected by them, that they seem, as it were, blinded with excess of Light.

§ 150. But you'll say has Nature no share in the Production of Natural Things, and must they be all ascrib'd to the immediate and sole Operation of GOD? I answer, if by *Nature* is meant only the visible *Series* of Effects, or Sensations imprinted on our Minds, according to certain fixt and general Laws: Then 'tis plain, that Nature taken in this Sense cannot produce any thing at all. But if by *Nature* is meant  
some

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 205

some Being distinct from God, as well as from the Laws of Nature, and things perceiv'd by Sense, I must confess, that Word is to me an empty Sound, without any intelligible Meaning annexed to it. Nature, in this Acceptation, is a vain *Chimera* introduced by those Heathens, who had not just Notions of the Omnipresence and infinite Perfection of God. But it is more unaccountable, that it shou'd be receiv'd among *Christians* professing belief in the Holy Scriptures, which constantly ascribe those Effects to the immediate Hand of God, that Heathen Philosophers are wont to impute to Nature. *The LORD, he causeth the Vapours to ascend; he maketh Lightnings with Rain; he bringeth forth the Wind out of his Treasures. Jerem. Chap. 10. v. 13. He turneth the shadow of Death into the Morning, and maketh the Day dark with Night. Amos Chap. 5. v. 8. He visiteth the Earth, and maketh it soft with Showers: He blesseth the Springing thereof, and crowneth the Year with his Goodness; so that the Pastures are cloath'd with Flocks, and the Valleys are cover'd*  
over



*over with Corn.* See Psal. 65. But notwithstanding that this is the constant Language of Scripture; yet we have I know not what Aversion from believing, that GOD concerns himself so nearly in our Affairs. Fain wou'd we suppose him at a great distance off, and substitute some blind, unthinking Deputy in his stead, thô (if we may believe Saint *Paul*) *be be not far from every one of us.*

§ 151. It will, I doubt not, be objected, that the slow, gradual and round-about Methods observ'd in the Production of Natural Things, do not seem to have for their Cause the immediate Hand of an *Almighty Agent*. Besides, Monsters, untimely Births, Fruits blasted in the Blossom, Rains falling in desert Places, Miseries incident to Human Life, and the like, are so many arguments that the whole frame of Nature, is not immediately actuated and superintended by a Spirit of infinite Wisdom and Goodness. But the Answer to this Objection is in a good measure plain from Sect. LXII, it being  
visible,

Part I. of *Human Knowledge*. 207

visible, that the aforesaid Methods of Nature are absolutely necessary, in order to working by the most simple and general Rules, and after a steady and consistent Manner; which argues both the *Wisdom* and *Goodness* of God. For, it doth hence follow, that the Finger of God is not so conspicuous to the resolv'd and careless Sinner, which gives him an opportunity to harden in his Impiety, and grow ripe for Vengeance. *vid. Sect. LVII.* Such is the Artificial Contrivance of this mighty Machine of Nature, that whilst its Motions and various Phænomena strike on our Senses, the Hand which actuates the whole is itself unperceivable to Men of Flesh and Blood. *Verily* (saith the Prophet) *thou art a God that hidest thy self.* Isaiah Chap. 45. ver. 15. But tho' the Lord conceal himself from the Eyes of the *Sensual* and *Lazy*, who will not be at the least expence of Thought; yet to an unbiaßed and attentive Mind, nothing can be more plainly legible, than the intimate Presence of an *All-wise Spirit*, who Fashions, Regulates, and Sustains the  
the

the whole System of Beings. Secondly, It is clear from what we have elsewhere observ'd, that the Operating according to general and stated Laws, is so necessary for our Guidance in the affairs of Life, and letting us into the Secret of Nature, that without it, all Reach and Compass of Thought, all Human Sagacity and Design cou'd serve to no manner of Purpose: It were even impossible, there shou'd be any such Faculties or Powers in the Mind, *vid. Sect. XXXI.* Which one Consideration abundantly out-ballances whatever particular Inconveniences may thence arise.

§ 152. But we shou'd further consider, that the very Blemishes and Defects of Nature are not without their Use, in that they make an agreeable sort of Variety, and augment the Beauty of the rest of the Creation, as Shades in a Picture serve to set off the brighter and more enlighten'd Parts. We wou'd likewise do well to examine, whether our taxing the Waste of Seeds and Embryo's, and accidental Destruction of  
Plants



Part I. of *Human Knowledge*.. 209

Plants and Animals, before they come to full Maturity, as an Imprudence in the Author of Nature, be not the effect of Prejudice, contracted by our Familiarity with impotent and saving Mortals. In *Man*, indeed, a thrifty Management of those Things, which he cannot procure without much Pains and Industry, may be esteem'd *Wisdom*. But we must not imagine, that the inexplicably fine Machine of an Animal or Vegetable, costs the Great CREATOR any more Pains or Trouble in its Production, than a Pebble does: nothing being more evident, than that an Omnipotent Spirit, can indifferently produce every thing, by a meer *Fiat* or act of his Will. Hence it is plain, that the splendid Profusion of Natural Things shou'd not be interpreted, Weakness or Prodigality in the Agent who produces them, but rather be look'd on as an Argument of the Riches of his Power.

§ 153. As for the mixture of Pain or Uneasiness which is in the World,  
E c                      pursuant

purſuant to the General Laws of Nature, and the Actions of Finite, Imperfect Spirits; This, in the State we are in at preſent, is indiſpenſibly neceſſary to our Well-being. But our Proſpects are too narrow: We take, for Inſtance, the Idea of ſome one particular Pain into our Thoughts, and account it *Evil*; whereas if we enlarge our View, ſo as to comprehend the various Ends, Connexions, and Dependencies of things, on what Occaſions and in what Proportions, we are affected with Pain and Pleaſure, the Nature of Human Freedom, and the Deſign with which we are put into the World; we ſhall be forced to acknowledge that thoſe particular Things, which conſider'd in themſelves appear to be *Evil*, have the Nature of *Good*, when conſider'd as link'd with the whole System of Beings.

§ 154. From what has been ſaid it will be manifeſt to any Conſidering Perſon, that it's meerly for want of attention and comprehenſiveness of Mind  
that

Part I. of *Human Knowledge.* 211

that there are any Favourers of *Atheism* or the *Manichæan Heresie* to be found. Little and unreflecting Souls may, indeed, Burlesque the Works of Providence, the Beauty and Order whereof they have not Capacity, or will not be at the Pains, to comprehend. But those who are Masters of any justness and extent of Thought and are withal used to reflect, can never sufficiently admire the Divine Traces of Wisdom and Goodness, that shine throughout the Oeconomy of Nature. But what Truth is there which glares so strongly on the Mind, that by an aversion of Thought, a wilful shutting of the Eyes, we may not escape seeing it, at least with a full and direct view? Is it therefore to be wonder'd at, if the generality of Men, who are ever intent on Business or Pleasure, and little used to fix or open the Eye of their Mind, shou'd not have all that Conviction and Evidence of the Being of GOD, which might be expected in Reasonable Creatures?



§ 155. We shou'd rather admire, that Men can be found so Stupid as to neglect, than that neglecting they shou'd be unconvinced of, such an evident and momentous Truth. And yet it is to be fear'd that too many of Parts and Leisure, who live in Christian Countries, are meerly thro' a supine and dreadful Negligence sunk into a sort of *Demy-Atheism*. They can't say there is not a God, but neither are they convinced that there is. For what else can it be but some lurking Infidelity, some secret misgivings of Mind, with regard to the Existence and Attributes of God, which permits Sinners to grow and harden in Impiety? Since it is downright impossible, that a Soul pierced and enlighten'd with a thorough Sense of the Omnipresence, Holiness, and Justice of that *Almighty Spirit*, shou'd persist in a remorseless Violation of his Laws. We ought, therefore, earnestly to meditate and dwell on those  
important

Part I. of *Human Knowledge.* 213

important Points; that so we may attain Conviction without all Scruple, that *the Eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the Evil and the Good; that he is with us and keepeth us in all places whither we go, and giveth us Bread to eat and Raiment to put on; that he is present and conscious to our innermost Thoughts; in fine, that we have a most absolute and immediate Dependence on Him. A clear View of which great Truths cannot chuse but fill our Hearts, with an awful Circumspection and holy Fear, which is the strongest Incentive to Vertue, and the best Guard against Vice.*

§ 156. For after all, what deserves the first place in our Studies, is the Consideration of *God*, and our *Duty*; which to promote as it was the the main drift and design of my Labours, so shall I esteem them altogether useless and ineffectual, if, by what I have said I cannot inspire my  
Readers

214 *Of the Principles* Part I.

Readers with a pious Sense of the Presence of GOD! And having shewn the Falseness or Vanity of those barren Speculations, which make the chief Employment of Learned Men, the better dispose them to reverence and embrace the Salutary Truths of the GOSPEL, which to Know and to Practise, is the highest Perfection of Human Nature.



---

*FINIS.*

---



L  
e-  
e  
e-  
a-  
er  
ce  
L,  
ne